BLUE BOOK

OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE

APRIL
15¢

•

The Treasure of Abdul the Damned
A Red Wolf story
By **WILLIAM MAKIN**

•

FULTON GRANT
H. BEDFORD-JONES
WILLIAM CHESTER
GORDON KEYNE
WILLIAM MacLEOD RAINE

•

"De Yar of Jubilo"
A short novel (complete) of the Civil War
By **CARL CHAPIN**

•

Fully Illustrated

PAINTED BY HERBERT MORTON STOOPS TO ILLUSTRATE "DE YAR OF JUBILO"

Who's Who in Blue Book

Among the Illustrators

Austin Briggs

He was born in a private car on a railway siding in Minnesota; for his father was an electrical engineer engaged in revising a telegraph system, and his wife traveled with him. . . . Later the family settled in Detroit, and there, Mr. Briggs won a scholarship in an art school that started him on his career as an illustrator. He moved to New York in 1928 and since that time his work has appeared in Collier's, Pictorial Review and other magazines as well as in Blue Book. He is married and the father of two children—and is a table-tennis expert (heaven help you if he hears you call it ping-pong!) At the left is his own idea of what he looks like.

George Avison

He lives at Norwalk, Conn., which was his birthplace. He got his training at the New York School of Art under William M. Chase and Edward Penfield, and was also a pupil of Frederick Yohn. Besides his work as an illustrator he has designed several houses in the early American style, on which he is an authority, and has painted many landscapes. In the field of mural decoration an outstanding example of his work is a panel thirty-four feet long in the New Canaan Town Hall. At present he is assisting in the design of murals for the New York World's Fair.

Frederic Anderson

"I was born in 1894 in Cambridge, Mass.," Mr. Anderson reports. "My parents were born in Finland. My father followed the sea. As a boy, I wanted to do the same, and my first drawings were of ships. I moved to Philadelphia, where I had my art training, and was graduated from the Industrial Arts School, and worked for some of the magazines. Enlisted in an illustrators' unit—dissected, and drew operations for a year, making a medical history of the war! The armistice was signed, and I'd not got over. Painted some portraits of generals, and came on home, back to work for the magazines. Bought a farm in Chester Co., Penn., but am now located in New York, taking art as a vocation."

Peter Kuhlhoff

Everyone calls him Pete, though that is not the name his parents gave him—he's that kind of fellow. He was born in Emporia, Kansas, out where they raise tall corn and measure their men by the yard—he stands six feet, seven. He was graduated from the University of Missouri as an electrical engineer; and "before he went wrong" (his own phrase) he was a specialist in installing telephone systems. Since he came to New York his drawings and lithographs have won increasing recognition. He is an expert pistol-shot and a candid-camera addict.

ARE YOU JUST HOPING TO LAND IN A GOOD JOB?

HOPE without foundation is pretty futile in this competitive age! But hope plus training is a winning combination — and all over this country today, in all kinds of professions and trades, men are getting ahead — landing in good jobs — earning more money — because of serious and systematic study of International Correspondence Schools' courses. These courses are giving them the training they need. Investigation will not put you under any obligation. Mail the coupon!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2423-D, SCRANTON, PENNA.

★ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X: ★

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect	☐ Sheet Metal Worker	☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting	☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Architectural Draftsman	☐ Boilermaker	☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation	☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Building Estimating	☐ Telegraph Engineer	☐ Air Conditioning	☐ Chemistry
☐ Contractor and Builder	☐ Telephone Work ☐ Radio	☐ Steam Engineer	☐ Pharmacy
☐ Structural Draftsman	☐ Mechanical Engineering	☐ Steam Electric Engineer	☐ Coal Mining
☐ Structural Engineer	☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Marine Engineer	☐ Mine Foreman ☐ Fire Bosses
☐ Management of Inventions	☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker	☐ R. R. Locomotives	☐ Navigation
☐ Electrical Engineer	☐ Patternmaker	☐ R. R. Section Foreman	☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Diesel Engines	☐ Air Brakes ☐ R. R. Signalmen	☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas	☐ Aviation Engines	☐ Highway Engineering	☐ Agriculture
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints	☐ Automobile Mechanic	☐ Civil Engineering	☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Heat Treatment of Metals	☐ Refrigeration	☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Poultry Farming

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Service Station Salesmanship	☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Secretarial Work	☐ First Year College Subjects	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Spanish	☐ Business Correspondence	☐ College Preparatory
☐ Accountancy	☐ French	☐ Stenography and Typing	☐ Illustrating
☐ Cost Accountant	☐ Salesmanship	☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier	☐ Cartooning
☐ C. P. Accountant	☐ Advertising	☐ Railway Mail Clerk	☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs

DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

☐ Home Dressmaking	☐ Advanced Dressmaking	☐ Millinery	☐ Foods and Cookery
☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing		☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering	

Name.....*Age*.....*Address*.....

City.....*State*.....*Present Position*.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

APRIL, 1938 VOL. 66, NO. 6

Short Stories

The Treasure of Abdul the Damned By William Makin 6
Illustrated by Austin Briggs

Warriors in Exile By H. Bedford-Jones 17
XI—"The Crime of the Legion." *Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon*

This Fighter Was Different By Fulton Grant 28
Wood Engravings by L. F. Grant

The Break's Tonight By Gordon Keyne 62
"Strange Escapes"—No. III. *Illustrated by Earl Blossom*

Good Night to All the World
By H. Bedford-Jones and Captain L. B. Williams 98
"Ships and Men"—No. XVI. *Illustrated by Yngve E. Soderberg and George Avison*

Roving Patrol By Robert R. Mill 129
Illustrated by Earl Blossom

Two Serial Novels

Kioga of the Unknown Land By William Chester 40
Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

A Price on His Head By William MacLeod Raine 108
Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff

A Spirited Novelette

De Yar of Jubilo By Carl M. Chapin 70
Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

Prize Stories of Real Experience

Adrift on the Whelping Ice By R. P. McRice 137
An unusual story from a Newfoundland reader.

Ants and Alligators By Tracy Richardson 134
Wherein a noted soldier of fortune encounters a new kind of enemy.

High Bridge By C. Steele 142
Twice in danger from a swollen river—a ranchwoman's story.

Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

McCALL CORPORATION
William B. Warner, *President*
Marvin Pierce, *Vice-President*

Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine
Francis Hutter, *Secretary*
J. D. Hartman, *Treasurer*

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

Published monthly, at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—April, 1938. Vol. LXVI, No. 6.

Copyright, 1938, by McCall Corporation in the United States and Great Britain.

Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1897. Subscription Prices, one year $1.50, two years $2.00 in U. S. and Canada; foreign postage $1.00 per year. For change of address, give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new. Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in the Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Printed in U.S.A.

Prize Offer for Real Experiences

THERE is material for a novel in every person's life, it has been said. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of those accepted each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, an average price of $50.

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

Train for

ELECTRICITY

IN 12 WEEKS AT COYNE

The great Coyne Shops in Chicago have a world-wide reputation for training men here in Chicago in this big-pay field in only 12 weeks. Then they get behind you to help you to success by giving you lifetime employment service. By my new plan YOU can take advantage of their wonderful method of learning-by-doing NOW—no need to lose time and money while you strive and save to raise the necessary tuition.

I WILL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Get training now. **Then start paying for your training a full two months after your regular 12-weeks training period ends—then take a full 18 months to complete your payments.** Send coupon to me at once. I will then send you complete details of this sensational new plan, together with the BIG FREE illustrated Book telling all about COYNE and how **many earn while learning** and the training you get here **without book study** or useless theory.

H. C. Lewis

SEND NOW FOR FULL DETAILS!

Mr. H. C. Lewis, President.
Dept. 49-14, 500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Tell me how you will finance my training at COYNE and send me the BIG FREE illustrated book on ELECTRICITY.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

Sells 19 Features In Six Months

"I have sold, up to date, nineteen features to the Detroit Free Press and have been made their correspondent here," writes Mrs. Leonard Sanders of 218 Union St., Milford, Mich., on completing the N. I. A. course. Her skilful handling of feature stories was the reason given by the editor for her appointment. Mrs. Sanders' first feature was sold less than four months after she enrolled with N. I. A.

A Challenge

to those who hesitate about writing

Here's a chance to take a test that may get you started

Are you one of the many people who feel that they can write but fear the disillusionment of failure? That is unfortunate—and, perhaps, thoughtless. For thousands of men and women, perhaps with no more latent ability than you have, are adding regularly to their income by writing. In fact, these so-called "unknowns" supply the bulk of stories and articles published in America. This material is easy to write. It is in constant demand by publications everywhere. And no one need be a genius to get material accepted.

Stop guessing—know where you stand

Why not get a reliable opinion on your chances for writing success? The Newspaper Institute of America offers a free test of writing ability. It's simple—yet hundreds of applicants fail to pass it. But they lose nothing by trying. Those who succeed are qualified to take the home-study writing course for which the Newspaper Institute is noted.

The N. I. A. is an organization of seasoned newspaper men who teach you what it takes to sell stories and articles. Training is by the New York Copy-Desk Method which has schooled so many newspaper men for successful writing. Its chief principle is that you learn to write by writing!

Thus you start with the very same kind of exciting assignments metropolitan reporters get. You "cover" them at home, on your own time. Your work is criticized constructively from the practical viewpoint of a city editor.

The object is to develop your own style, not to make you conform to the style of model authors. You are encouraged to retain your own fresh, individual appeal while acquiring the "professional touch" editors look for.

Thousands of successful writers have learned their profitable art at home by this quick, moderately priced training. It is a unique, thoroughly established channel to paying journalism that is open to any investigation you want to give it.

But first send for the free Writing Aptitude Test by simply filling out the coupon below. Then mail it today . . . now, before you forget. Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York.

Free

Newspaper Institute of America
One Park Avenue, New York

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit, as promised in Blue Book, April.

Miss }
Mrs. } .....
Mr. }

Address.....

(All correspondence confidential. No salesmen will call on you.)

68D668

8 WAYS TO SAVE SHAVING DOLLARS
PROBAK
PROBAK JUNIOR
PROBAK JUNIOR BLADES
Get on the road to real shaving comfort and economy—with Probak Jr. Blades! You pay only 10¢ for a package of four blades—*eight* face-saving, *smoother shaving* edges!
8 SUPER-KEEN SHAVING EDGES FOR 10¢
PROBAK JUNIOR

Next Month:

"Beyond Glory"

A conspicuously talented new writer gives us a fascinating novelette of the "men in white"—scientists risking their lives while fighting against disease and a tropical wilderness.

By CARL COLE

In the May issue!

"Psych' the Pug"

Mr. Grant has written many memorable stories of a serious sort. Here you meet him in a new mood—and a most attractive one.

By FULTON GRANT

"Nothing Heroic"

A spirited drama of air adventure by America's favorite pilot-writer.

By LELAND JAMIESON

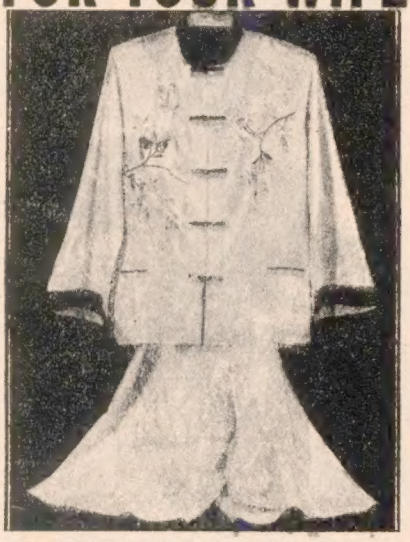
"The Dogs of Istanbul"

A weird wild adventure of the Red Wolf of Arabia.

By WILLIAM MAKIN

And many other fine stories by such writers as H. Bedford-Jones, William Chester and Gordon Keyne.

FOR YOUR WIFE



CANTON PAJAMA SUIT

Special Introductory Price!

福 壽 祥

These lovely new Oriental Jinken Satin Pajama Suits are the smartest of garments—for lounging, sleeping, etc.—make ideal birthday gifts. Come in rich Black Satin with trim in Chinese Red. Also Red with White; Royal Blue Satin with Gold trim; Green with Gold. All hand-embroidered in silk floral designs. Belt to match. State size.

$2.95 Post Paid

(Sells regularly for $5)

SEND NO MONEY

Shipped C.O.D. or send check, stamps, currency or money order on my money back guarantee.

DOROTHY BOYD ART STUDIO
238 Art Center Bldg., San Francisco, Calif.
Write for catalog Oriental Articles from $2 to $50

TIRED OF LOATHSOME SCHOOL-AGE PIMPLES?

Let millions of tiny, living plants help keep blood free of skin irritants

Thousands of young people have said good-by to the curse of youth—a pimply skin. They know what happens between the ages of 18 and 25, the time of life when important glands develop. Your system is upset. Poisons may pollute your blood stream and bubble out on your skin in ugly pimples. Then you need to cleanse and purify your blood.

Let Fleischmann's Yeast help remove these impurities the natural way. Millions of tiny, active, *living* yeast plants will help keep poisons from the blood and help to heal your broken-out skin. Many report amazing results in 30 days or less. Start eating Fleischmann's Yeast now. Buy some tomorrow!

Copyright, 1933, Standard Brands Incorporated

STAY
a wage-slave
IF *you wish*
BUT-

DON'T you wish you were like some of your friends who are forging ahead while you stay put? Like it or not, people size you up by what you earn. Is their sizing flattering to you? —Why not *plan* to get ahead, to make more money, to get a raise? If you don't know how, perhaps we can aid you as we have so many others. Chances are good that we can help you *boost yourself up* in ways you never thought of. —Thousands will gladly tell you how our planned training helped them—directed their work along *charted* paths to business success, bigger earnings, 10%, 20%, 50%, some even 100% and 200% greater income . . . At any rate, let us send you the inspiring book "Ten Years' Promotion in One." It's FREE! It will surely help you *plan* your next raise whether you ask us to *help* you plan or not. Write us today for the book—the coupon is for your convenience.

Find Yourself Through LaSalle!

LASALLE EXTENSION

Dept. 4389-R Chicago

Please send me full information regarding the training and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

- ☐ **Business Management:** Training for Official Managerial, Sales and Departmental Executive positions.
- ☐ **Modern Salesmanship:** Training for position as Sales Executive, Salesman, Sales Coach or Trainer, Sales Promotion Manager, Manufacturers' Agent, Solicitor, and all positions in retail, wholesale or specialty selling.
- ☐ **Higher Accountancy:** Training for position as Auditor, Comptroller, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc.
- ☐ **Traffic Management:** Training for position as Railroad, Truck or Industrial Traffic Manager, Rate Expert, Freight Solicitor, etc.
- ☐ **Law:** LL.B. Degree.
- ☐ **Stenotypy:** The up-to-date method for secretaries and court and convention reporters.
- ☐ **Modern Foremanship:** Training for positions in Shop Management, such as that of Superintendent, General Foreman, Foreman, Sub-Foreman, etc.
- ☐ **Industrial Management:** Training for positions in Works Management, Production Control, Industrial Engineering, etc.
- ☐ **Modern Business Correspondence:** Training for Sales or Collection Correspondent, Sales Promotion Manager, Mail Sales Manager, Secretary, etc.
- ☐ **Stenography:** Training in the new superior machine shorthand, Stenotypy.

☐ **Expert Bookkeeping**	☐ **Railway Accounting**
☐ **Business English**	☐ **Effective Speaking**
☐ **Credit and Collection Correspondence**	☐ **C. P. A. Coaching**
	☐ **Commercial Law**

Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

The Treasure of

In that strangest of cities, now called Istanbul, the intelligence officer known as the Red Wolf encounters a fantastic murder mystery.

"I CAME into the world naked and with no worldly possessions. That is true enough. And now—"

"And now, my dear Pierre, I find you married and as comfortable as any bourgeois."

Paul Rodgers, the Anglo-American intelligence officer known as the Red Wolf of Arabia, had a smile on his thin, ascetic face as he made this comment to his companion.

They were walking the Grande Rue of Pera, that European street in Istanbul. The two men presented a queer contrast: Rodgers, erect and lean, the dark tan of the Arabian sun still deep in his features, soberly clad in clothes that suggested Saville Row. In comparison, his companion was an outrage: Small and podgy, he trotted with perspiring discomfort alongside the lithe figure, and his clothes were shapeless and of the alpaca quality which only a Frenchman with contempt for fashion would wear. Pierre Fresnaye bounded, ball-like, and caught up with the striding Rodgers.

"I know what you are thinking, *mon ami,*" he gasped. "You are thinking that the young officer of *cuirassiers,* with whom you drank and sang in Constantinople just after the war, is no more, *hein?*"

"I recall a gay young fellow who had not long left St. Cyr, but who had also seen enough of real war to be thankful it was all over," laughed Red Rodgers. "Yes, and you were good-looking in those days, Pierre."

"I was in love," panted the Frenchman.

"You were never out of love."

"Ah, but this was different. Only a fortnight, *mon cher* Paul, after you had left this city to disappear into the deserts of Arabia, I married."

"Who was she? The Austrian pastrycook whose cream puffs helped to ruin your figure, or the Russian princess

The pale-faced man had risen abruptly; he clutched at his throat, and a hoarse scream came forth.

Abdul the Damned

By WILLIAM MAKIN

whose store of vodka you helped to dissipate?"

"Ah, you can still *blague!* But she is the most beautiful, most adorable—"

"But who is she?"

"If you must know, she is a granddaughter of Abdul the Damned."

"You snatched her from the harem?" asked Rodgers, his gray eyes twinkling.

"NOTHING so romantic," protested the Frenchman. "Louetta—now Madame Fresnaye—was a most respectable young lady, living with her Turkish mother and Russian father in the suburbs of Istanbul."

"Astonishing how you came to make the acquaintance of such respectability!" Rodgers chaffed.

The podgy Frenchman sighed.

"I went to their house with an order for deportation of the Russian father. You see, I'm connected with the French Embassy here, a sort of—"

Rodgers nodded.

"A sort of international gendarme, eh?"

"You may call it that," agreed Pierre sadly. "Not a nice job for a soldier, moving on the dubious foreign exiles to some one else's beat in Europe."

"And you moved on the Russian father of Louetta?"

"I had to. Those were my orders," explained the Frenchman logically. "And the wife insisted on going with her husband. That left Louetta."

"They made her your problem?"

"Not exactly. But she was adorable and all alone. I could not resist her. I asked her to marry me, and *voilà*, she accepted. Her parents departed, and she remained as my wife."

"And are you happy?" asked Rodgers shrewdly.

"I am comfortable," winced Pierre. He stopped to mop his perspiring brow. "I think coffee and cigarettes are indicated, my friend," he added.

"After such a confession, you deserve it," agreed Rodgers, smiling. "Where shall we go?"

They were standing in the bright morning sunshine of Istanbul. The badly dressed cosmopolitan crowd sauntered past. Brilliant-eyed Greeks, furtive Armenians, sullen-faced Turks and an occasional commanding German shuffled the pavement.

"You realize where we are?" Pierre asked.

"But of course," nodded Rodgers. "This, during the old war days, was what we called Suicide Corner."

"Because of its lurking assassins, and the crimes that were committed in the name of freedom," nodded Pierre in turn. "And there, facing you, my friend, is the little confectionery shop where we have often in the old days drunk coffee and eaten Turkish delight."

AS if inevitably, they entered the slanting doorway. Rodgers looked about curiously. A few soiled tables and an array of battered chairs. Surely the same pock-faced Turk behind the counter. A few loungers at the tables, sipping coffee, reading political sheets, and spitting viciously at intervals on the sanded floor. Two ragged youths were serving the clients with coffee and cigarettes.

"For myself, I still prefer the Turkish delight," said Pierre, waving aside a proffered cigarette and helping himself from one of the little round boxes.

"Only a man with a capacious stomach could manage such stuff," smiled Rodgers. "But I see it is popular. *Regardez!*"

His searching eyes were turned toward a pale-faced man whose blue chin suggested that he had not troubled to shave for some days. The creased clothes he wore also suggested that they had been slept in. He was bending feverishly over some sheets of paper, his fingers dipping mechanically into the little round box of Turkish delight.

"I know him," said Pierre carelessly. "A queer fellow, by name of Raoul Duplessis. He came to the Embassy with a letter of introduction from Paris. He is a writer, or journalist. He says he is here to write a life of Abdul Hamid."

"You should introduce him to your wife," suggested Rodgers.

"He is not the sort of man I would ever introduce to my wife," replied Pierre primly. "There is something fantastic about him. Always he is prowling about the old palace of Abdul the Damned, staring at his own face in the many mirrors there, tapping the walls, and—"

He stopped. The pale-faced man had risen abruptly, knocking over his chair. His fingers clutched at his throat, and a hoarse scream came forth. The next moment he had pitched headlong over the table, his hands outstretched, the fingers working in convulsive agony.

Simultaneously, Rodgers had jumped from his chair and moved swiftly across the room. He came to the prone figure lying athwart the table. He clutched the tousled hair and pulled back the head. The glazed eyes stared up at him. The mouth had sagged into a frozen scream. The twitching hands were now still.

For a moment, all in that little shop behaved like clockwork dolls in which the mechanism had run down. Then the pock-faced Turk came lumbering from behind the counter. The other clients blinked, or spat nervously. Pierre, recovering from his astonishment, shuffled across the sanded floor to his friend.

"What is it, Paul?" he asked. He looked at the upturned face of the French journalist, and shivered. "Is he—"

"Dead," said Rodgers, abruptly.

"How horrible," muttered Pierre. "It must have been a very sudden attack. Why, I—"

He broke off, and glanced toward the box of Turkish delight that still remained on the dead man's table.

"That's probably where it came from," said Rodgers grimly. "Dusted with cyanide—or a pill of it hidden inside."

"Cyanide!" exclaimed Pierre. "Then this man has been—"

The intelligence officer nodded, and finished the sentence for him:

"Murdered," he said quietly. Then he turned to look at the strained, staring faces of the coffee-drinkers in the confectionery shop.

THOUGH Pierre Fresnaye had never anticipated the murder of a French national being thrust upon him under circumstances such as these, he behaved admirably. He was as cool and logical as a Frenchman could be in such a dastardly affair. He had the door of the confectionery shop closed, and began a pains-taking examination of everyone in the place. He borrowed several sheets of paper and began to compile the inevitable *dossier* of the crime. And he began his examination with the pock-faced Turk behind the counter.

"As I said before, the motive is obvious: a *crime passionel!*"

Despite the fellow's villainous appearance, he was clearly innocent. He admitted to serving Turkish coffee to the shabby French journalist, but denied serving Turkish delight. The Turk indicated that the round box of jelly dusted with cyanide was not of the same brand as that which Pierre Fresnaye had been enjoying.

"Do you suggest that this monsieur brought into your shop his own poisonous sweetmeat?" asked Pierre.

"This locale is still called Suicide Corner by the foreigners," replied the Turk, shrugging. "And one can never be certain what a Frenchman will do next."

Pierre Fresnaye scowled. He had no particular liking for the dead journalist, but as a citizen of France he was entitled to respect even from a vendor of Turkish coffee.

"Maybe one of your waiters served him with the Turkish delight," he snapped. "Bring them before me."

It was then the startling discovery was made that one of the ragged youths who had been serving the clients had disappeared. The other tremblingly disclaimed all knowledge of serving the dead man.

"We must find that other waiter, at once," declared Pierre, drawing a fresh sheet of paper toward him. "I must ask you to give me a full description of this individual."

The pock-faced Turk burst into a lurid description of the antecedents of the youth, giving him a most dubious ancestry. But of the present whereabouts of the waiter, he could tell nothing.

Just before the Turkish police arrived belatedly on the scene to take charge of the corpse, Pierre Fresnaye discovered another person missing from the confectionery-shop. That person was Paul Rodgers, who seemed to have slipped away before the Frenchman gave orders for the doors to be closed. This disappearance, considering that it was Rodgers who had presented him with the corpse, piqued the Frenchman. He considered it ungallant.

NEVERTHELESS he proceeded methodically with the examination. Before the Turkish police removed the corpse to the mortuary, he went through the pockets.

Except for an old Baedeker, a packet of cigarettes, the stub of a pencil, a few piastres and the key of a room at the Pera Palace hotel, the search revealed nothing of importance. With the key in his trouser pocket, Pierre Fresnaye left the confectionery-shop at Suicide Corner and proceeded to the hotel.

A few moments' conversation with the manager, and he ascended in the elevator to the top floor. There he hurried along an uncarpeted corridor to the back of the hotel where the cheap room was situated. He inserted the key in the door and quietly entered. A shock awaited him. A man, seated with his back to the

door, was scanning a medley of papers on a disordered dressing-table.

"Come in, Pierre!" commanded the figure. "I've been waiting for you."

The Frenchman glimpsed a lean, suntanned face in the mirror. It was Paul Rodgers.

"Might I ask what you are doing here?" demanded Pierre, with all the official dignity he could command.

RODGERS' jaw was set. There was a steely glint in the gray eyes.

"When a man is murdered in horrible fashion before my eyes," said the intelligence officer, "I am curious to find the reason. I knew that the journalist Raoul Duplessis was living in this hotel. I discovered the number of his room, entered it in my own fashion, and *voilà*, here I am."

"Exactly," nodded Pierre. "And may I ask if you have discovered anything further?"

"Beyond the fact that Monsieur Duplessis seemed to have a passion for Turkish baths as well as Turkish delight—nothing of importance. And you?"

Pierre Fresnaye paced the floor, gesturing despairingly.

"One of the waiters at the confectionery-shop has disappeared," he confessed. "It seems probable that he placed the Turkish delight before Duplessis at the same time as the coffee. He knew the client couldn't resist it. Once we find that waiter, we find the murderer."

"And the motive?" asked Rodgers.

"Isn't it obvious?"

"Nothing is obvious."

"You disappoint me, my dear Paul. I have heard so much of your brilliant work in the secret service. But then, I suppose this crime is not very subtle."

"I should like to hear your theory, Pierre."

"As I said before, the motive is obvious: A *crime passionel!*"

Rodgers smiled.

"I know that no Frenchman can believe in murder, unless a woman is involved," he murmured.

"But surely there must be a woman in the case?" protested Pierre.

"Perhaps there is."

"And she is loved distractedly by the waiter who committed the crime. I warned Duplessis that if he meddled with Turkish women he was seeking trouble."

"From one who has married a Turkish woman, such advice was indeed invaluable," smiled Rodgers.

"Louetta is very different from the ordinary woman," said Pierre severely.

"That I can well believe," said Rodgers. "I am, indeed, most anxious to make her acquaintance."

"And so you shall, once this disturbing affair is settled." Pierre Fresnaye glanced round the room. He noticed that even the sagging bed had been disturbed. "So you have already searched the room thoroughly, my dear Paul. Have you found anything vital?"

"I think I have already mentioned the passion for Turkish baths possessed by Duplessis. There are several used tickets lying about."

"Be serious, Paul."

"But for a man who seemed to have the usual Latin distaste for baths, such a passion is most curious."

"Any papers?" inquired Pierre Fresnaye brusquely.

"Some manuscripts on the furtive habits of Abdul the Damned, his fear of assassination and—oh, yes, a plan of the old palace and harem."

"Which is now a museum and pleasure-park, by order of Kemal Ataturk," commented Pierre. "That but convinces me my original theory was correct. This is a *crime passionel.*"

THE intelligence officer smiled, and offered his cigarette-case to the Frenchman. Mechanically, Pierre took one. He failed to notice that Rodgers screwed a piece of paper into a spill, lit it, and held it forth as a light. Rodgers then lit his own cigarette and considered the smoldering spill.

"Who is Madame Brusa?" he asked.

"But I told you," said Pierre impatiently. "She is my mother-in-law, once in the harem of Abdul Hamid. She is, in fact, the mother of Louetta. I *did* tell you, *hein?*"

"You must have; otherwise the name would not have occurred to me."

"But what has Madame Brusa to do with this affair?" began Pierre. "After all, she is in Paris, and—"

HE got no further. The door opened, and a man came in quickly. He was followed by three others. The door was closed almost as quickly, and one of the men placed his back against it. Pierre Fresnaye stared at the intruders with open-mouthed astonishment. Each one of them had his face covered with a mask. Each one had a drawn automatic pistol. Three of those automatics were leveled at Pierre and Red Rodgers.

"Please to raise your hands above your heads!" commanded one of the four intruders in French. "We shall not incommode you any longer than is necessary."

"This is an outrage," spluttered Pierre. "Who are you?"

"We are not here to answer questions," grunted the leader. "Nor do we wish to hear your voice raised above a whisper. You will understand that any attempt to raise an alarm will necessitate our leaving two corpses in this room."

"As you have already left one in a confectioner's shop," murmured Rodgers, who had raised his hands in leisurely obedience.

The automatic came a step nearer.

"You would be wise to forget what you saw at Suicide Corner this morning. No one should be too curious about a corpse in Istanbul."

Rodgers smiled, and seated himself on the sagging bed.

"At least you will permit me to be comfortable?" he asked.

"Keep your gun pointed at this *poil de carotte,*" commanded the leader. "And if he moves, shoot."

He nodded to one of his companions, and they began quickly and expertly to search the room. Nothing was ignored. Even a worn strip of carpet was lifted. Rodgers was urged by the automatic to vacate the bed. The pillow-cases were ripped open and the contents scattered. Purple with indignation, Pierre Fresnaye watched this desecration, his podgy hands held above his head.

"It's an international outrage!" he spluttered bravely. "I'll have the whole Turkish police on your trail."

"Another word from you, and I shall be compelled to send you posthaste to the angels," said the leader suavely. "I have no desire to add another corpse to this affair."

"Yet it appears to be an affair with many corpses," added Rodgers, who had been pushed up against a wall, but continued to smoke his cigarette with evident enjoyment.

His remark passed unheeded, for the searchers were too busy, and too much in a hurry. They did not neglect to go through the pockets of the two men they held at the point of the automatics, but they returned everything. Clearly they were baffled.

"All right. There's nothing here," said the leader at last, glancing at a watch he held in his hand. "Let's be moving."

The leader was the last to leave the room. Thin bloodless lips from beneath the mask uttered a final warning.

"I suggest, messieurs, for the benefit of your future health, that you make no effort to raise an alarm for the next ten minutes."

"We appreciate your consideration," nodded Rodgers. "*Au revoir.*"

"Good-by," said the leader with finality, and closed the door quickly.

IT is to the credit of Pierre Fresnaye that he promptly launched his podgy figure at that door. It was locked from the outside.

"An outrage!" he shrilled. "As a member of the French Embassy I shall demand the fullest apologies from the Turkish Government. I shall insist that—"

"Calm yourself, Pierre," said Rodgers, seating himself on the bed and lighting another cigarette. "At least you now realize that this is no ordinary affair, no mere *crime passionel* as at first you suspected."

Pierre turned and regarded this lithe individual who was stretching himself indolently. He looked down into the gray eyes.

"You know something, Paul," he said abruptly.

Rodgers shook his head, slowly.

"At the moment I know nothing of any consequence," he said quietly. "But I have become very curious."

A slight sound caused them both to swivel round. Some one was trying the knob of the door. Pierre placed his fingers to his lips, warningly, and took up a position ready to leap upon the intruder. There was the sound of the key turning in the lock. Slowly the door opened. A slim hand thrust forward, followed by an exquisite yellow

silk frock. The next moment a pretty, dark-haired woman stepped into the room. Pierre, about to pounce, stood frozen.

"Louetta—*ma petite!*" he babbled. "What brings you here?"

She gazed at him with frightened eyes. Her mouth opened to speak. Then she saw Paul Rodgers rising from the bed, and suddenly, she slumped to the floor in a faint.

"You fool!" exclaimed Rodgers bending over the prone form. "You frightened her."

"But this is incomprehensible," gasped Pierre. "What has this business to do with my wife?"

"Nothing, except that I telephoned her to meet us both here for lunch," snapped the intelligence officer. "I told you I wished to make her acquaintance."

"And so?"

"So now perhaps you'll hand me that jug of water I see in the corner. We'll do our best to bring Louetta back to her senses."

With a deep sigh of concern Pierre stepped over the inert figure of his wife and grasped the jug.

EXACTLY one hour later Pierre Fresnaye leaned back in his chair in the dining-room of the Pera Palace hotel. There was satisfaction in his face.

"An excellent lunch, my dear Paul," he said. "And the wine could not have been surpassed. What do you say, Louetta?"

"I appreciated the lunch enormously," smiled the dark beauty who sat between the two men. But there was an anxious gleam in her eyes as she raised them to gaze at Red Rodgers. "I'm only sorry I couldn't do justice to it."

"That is because you are still a little frightened, *ma petite,*" said Pierre solicitously. "But now that my stomach is itself again, I will go and telephone the Turkish police of the outrage that was perpetrated on us this morning. If you could have seen those cursed bandits, *ma petite,* jabbing their automatics into my stomach!"

"And such a capacious stomach," chaffed Rodgers. "*Allez,* Pierre, and rouse the majesty of the Turkish police."

They watched the podgy figure in its disgraceful alpaca coat marching toward the telephone.

At that same moment Louetta whispered to Rodgers:

"Then Raoul Duplessis is dead?"

"Murdered," said Rodgers quietly. "He was poisoned within a few paces of your husband and myself."

"How horrible!" The tinted fingertips of the Turkish beauty covered her eyes. "Does my husband suspect?"

"That you knew Raoul, and were in the habit of visiting him secretly at this hotel? Not as yet. Being French, he smells a woman in this affair; but his own wife would be the last person to suspect."

"Why, then, did you telephone me to come here at once? Was it your wish to force me to confess to my husband?"

THE gray eyes of the intelligence officer regarded her steadily. He smoothed the back of his head with something of a troubled gesture.

"Is there anything to confess?" he asked.

"It was no sordid love-affair," she flashed back at him. "Indeed, it was no love-affair at all."

Her rouged lips were trembling as she spoke. Rodgers offered her a cigarette.

"I rather guessed that," he nodded. "But I wanted to be sure. You see, in the few minutes I had alone in the bedroom of the dead man, I was able to find evidence of his real business in Istanbul."

She leaned forward eagerly.

"Then you know that—"

"That he was sent by your mother, Madame Brusa, who dared not herself enter Istanbul again. That your mother interested and excited Raoul Duplessis in the story of the treasure left in this city by Abdul Hamid, the old Sultan, who fled when the Young Turks overthrew him. That the treasure is valued in millions. That your mother has a shrewd idea where part of the treasure is hidden."

"You learned a good deal in those few minutes, Monsieur Rodger'," commented the Turkish beauty.

"And was destroying a good deal of incriminating evidence when your husband arrived to disturb me," said Rodgers. "I imagine that was the evidence being searched for by the four bandits who held us up in the room. By the way, who are those bandits?"

The woman answered readily:

"They too are searching for the treasure. They are a political group who desire to overthrow the dictatorship of Kemal Ataturk and bring back power to the Young Turks. The leader is Nozat

Pasha, the son of a former Grand Vizier. He has expensive luxury tastes, and not enough money to satisfy them. The finding of the treasure of Abdul the Damned would give him a new lease of glorious dissipation. Also immense power in the new party."

Rodgers' face was stern.

"And of course the reason for this little melodrama, the murder of Raoul Duplessis, the plotting and counter-plotting, has one object only—the greedy desire to appropriate all the treasure without handing over the two-thirds claimed by the government of the Ghazi, Kemal Ataturk?"

"That is so," agreed Madame Fresnaye evenly. "Those who lived and suffered with Abdul the Damned feel that they deserve some recompense."

"Such as your mother, for example?"

"She had lived in the harem, and she had heard whispers of the treasure. She never really knew where the treasure was hidden when Abdul Hamid fled from the palace. But she knew that the treasure existed, and that the old Sultan had died without revealing the hiding-place. She persuaded Raoul Duplessis to go to Istanbul and search for it."

"And not entirely trusting him, she asked you to watch him?"

"You have a quick mind, Monsieur Rodger'," she said. "I should not be surprised to learn that you know where the treasure is hidden."

The intelligence officer smiled.

"If I did, I should have to be regarded as your enemy, madame, for I would hand over to the Ghazi that which should belong to Turkey."

"And the other third for yourself, *hein?*"

"No; I am prepared to leave that to the disposal of your mother and yourself. I have no desire to finger the treasure of Abdul the Damned. It is treasure soaked in blood and tears."

"Then you do know where it is hidden?"

There was an angry gleam in her eyes. But the keen, sun-tanned features of the man opposite were inscrutable.

"I have an idea," he said simply.

"And did Raoul Duplessis know?"

"He too had an idea," said Rodgers. "Because of it, he was murdered. You will appreciate that I have no desire to say any more."

It was at that moment the podgy figure of Pierre Fresnaye returned. He was rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"Louetta was adorable; I could not resist her," Pierre told Rodgers.

"The Turkish police have made profound apologies to me," he said. "They hope to have the bandits safely in jail within the next few hours. They are to be taught a lesson. And now, I think I must hurry back to the Embassy. What are you going to do, Paul?"

Rodgers, preoccupied, jerked back his head.

"I—I think I shall take a Turkish bath," he smiled.

Paul Rodgers realized, as soon as he stepped out of the hotel, that he was being followed. Disdaining the offer of a taxi, which drew alongside a little too readily, he walked with easy athletic stride along the pavements of Istanbul.

He crossed the Galatea Bridge, paid toll to the ragged keeper at the turnstile, ignored the swirling Bosporus with its laden barges, and emerged into the old city. Here he began to climb. The streets were mostly deserted, save for the inevitable mangy dogs nosing among refuse heaps. Up a steep lane he traveled, until at last he was confronted by an old Byzantine gateway.

It was the magnificent entrance to what had once been the palace of Abdul Hamid. The terror-stricken but cunning Caliph had entrenched himself in a fortress, filled with eunuchs and armed guards. He had left it in the time of revolution, and died peaceably in bed. Now, by command of Kemal Ataturk, the palace had become a museum, the surrounding park a playground, and

what was once the harem had been transformed into a country-club.

It was toward this section of the old palace that Red Rodgers now wandered. He hesitated for a moment, as if in idle meditation. From the corner of his eye he observed the four individuals who had trailed him from the Pera Palace hotel. From their build he unhesitatingly placed them as the four men who had searched the room of Raoul Duplessis.

"At least they will not be able to conceal automatics in a Turkish bath," he said to himself with a smile. "And I am not going to miss that bath."

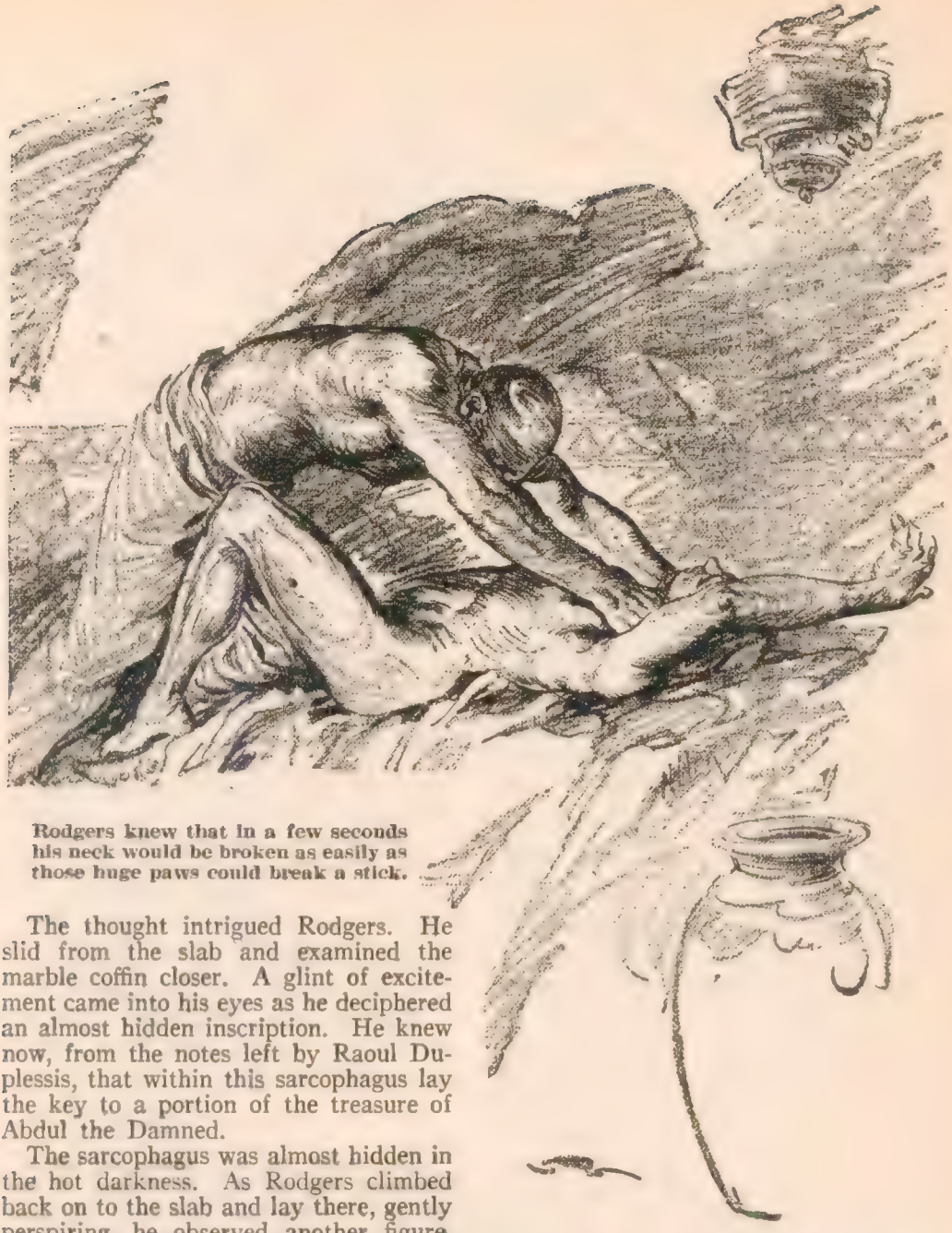
The entrance was before him, boldly labeled "*Hamam.*" A eunuch, in faded blue garb, took the piasters and indicated a curtained compartment. Rodgers entered, and quickly divested himself. A few moments later, a towel about his waist and slippers on his feet, he shuffled into the series of hot rooms which had once been the private bath of the Caliph Abdul Hamid.

THE rooms were marble-walled and cunningly heated to suffocation-point. Two old Turks, their stomachs wet with the perspiration of excess fat, nodded listlessly in the heat and gave the impression that they were there for all time. Rodgers stretched himself on a bench against the wall, and through half-closed eyes observed his surroundings.

He soon sensed that he was being closely watched in turn. He moved his head and faced the gaze. It came from a powerful negro slave, bare to the waist, his black torso worthy of a sculptor's art. The negro was obviously a *masseur.* His black face broadened into a grin as he realized that Rodgers was watching him. Actually, the negro was admiring the slim, sinewy body of the white man. Stretched out on the bench, Rodgers gave the appearance of supple steel.

A minute later one of the old Turks handed himself over to the negro *masseur.* While the black giant was punching and smoothing the creases of flesh, the intelligence officer had discovered in a corner of one of the rooms what appeared to be a marble sarcophagus.

There was nothing particularly artistic about it. It possessed a scroll of carved marble flowers. For the rest, it was covered with a heavy slab and cemented down. Rodgers stretched himself upon it and lay there easily. He could visualize the podgy figure of Abdul Hamid himself lying on that marble box, contemplating how he came into the world naked, yet amassed a wealth of treasure.



Rodgers knew that in a few seconds his neck would be broken as easily as those huge paws could break a stick.

The thought intrigued Rodgers. He slid from the slab and examined the marble coffin closer. A glint of excitement came into his eyes as he deciphered an almost hidden inscription. He knew now, from the notes left by Raoul Duplessis, that within this sarcophagus lay the key to a portion of the treasure of Abdul the Damned.

The sarcophagus was almost hidden in the hot darkness. As Rodgers climbed back on to the slab and lay there, gently perspiring, he observed another figure, naked, towel about the waist, stepping into the room. There was no mistaking that cruel mouth with its thin line of lips. He was the leader of the bandits, Nozat Pasha. Curiosity had led him to follow Red Rodgers into the bath. The other three, obviously, had been ordered to keep watch outside.

The old Turk, a wreck of his former self after the negro had pummeled him, was led away. At the same time the intelligence officer observed that the newcomer was in whispered talk with the *masseur*. Their gaze traveled toward the old marble sarcophagus where Rodgers was lying. At length the negro nodded, clenched his hands together, and displayed huge, knotted muscles.

"I almost believe that the son of the Grand Vizier would kill me now, if he was certain I had led him to the treasure," pondered Rodgers. "Hot as this place is, I begin to realize the fascination it had for Raoul Duplessis."

Quietly he slipped from the slab to make a further examination of his find. His long, thin fingers traveled slowly over the wet marble. When he straightened himself, there was certainty in his expression. He shuffled the hot floor in his slippers, smoothing the back of his now perspiring red head of hair.

It was then he noticed the negro confronting him. The fellow's teeth were bared in a jovial grin. The slave spoke in bad French.

"M'sieur will permit the massage?"

Rodgers nodded, and indicated the sarcophagus. A moment later and he was again stretched supine on the slab.

The negro laved him with cool water. Then, with black hands dripping, he bent down to the massage. His paws began to stroke the muscles of the white man's body almost as though it had been presented to him as a blood-sacrifice.

Rodgers lay limply on his back. From his slab he turned his head and caught a glimpse of the leader of the bandits, standing tense a few yards away. The cruel mouth had tightened. And in that moment the intelligence officer realized his danger. The black paws had already closed about his neck.

Rodgers saw the muscles on the negro's arms swelling. At the same time he felt those black paws relentlessly pressing back his head. A fierce pain assailed him. He knew that in a few seconds his neck would be broken as easily as those huge paws could break a stick.

He stiffened his body, then suddenly let it go limp. With a snort of triumph the negro bent lower. That was the moment when Rodgers with a powerful effort arched his body like a bow. Simultaneously he sent a bare foot like a piston into the stomach of the negro. There was a grunt, a squeal like that from an expiring toy balloon, and the negro sank writhing to the ground as Rodgers twisted eel-like from the sarcophagus—just in time to meet the sudden onslaught of the naked Nozat Pasha.

Rodgers was in an ugly mood. He did not hesitate. As the Turk reached him, he slithered easily from the menacing hands and brought the arm of his assailant with a savage twist behind him. He heard the snap of the bone, and exulted in it. He left his two assailants lying there in agony, with an old Turk, bulging-eyed, gazing at the scene.

A FEW moments later he had dressed and walked out of the bath. The other bandits were waiting in the park beyond. Rodgers went up to them, produced a cigarette and asked for a light.

"Your leader, Nozat Pasha, needs your help," he said in Arabic. "I suggest that you go to him before Allah removes his worthless body from this world."

Then, with a careless nod, he walked away. . . .

That same evening Pierre Fresnaye received a letter from his old friend. He slit it open just as he was about to dine in his little villa which had all the appearance of a bourgeois villa in the suburbs of Paris. He read the letter aloud to his wife:

My dear Pierre:

It may ease your mind to know that Raoul Duplessis was murdered because he had learned where the treasure of old Abdul the Damned was hidden. There were others who also sought that treasure.

From an examination of the papers left by Duplessis I received an indication as to where the treasure might be found. The trail led me to the Turkish bath in the old palace where, unknown to all, and particularly to the negro attendant, a marble sarcophagus, with the cover carefully cemented, contains the key and directions whereby the treasure may be found—probably buried somewhere near.

I suggest you make the proper official representations to the Turkish Government, and claim as your share one third of this treasure. I need not stress the urgency of making these representations at once. Perhaps I ought to have claimed this share of the treasure for myself, but I have to confess that it was the charming Madame Fresnaye who, unthinkingly, gave me a clue to its whereabouts.

Please accept my felicitations, and assure the charming Madame Fresnaye of my constant devotion.

Yours ever,
Paul Rodgers.

"Now what do you make of that!" exclaimed the astonished Pierre. "The treasure of Abdul the Damned! Probably worth millions of francs. And presented to me by my oldest friend."

"He presents it as though it was my dowry to you," said his wife, a little bitterly.

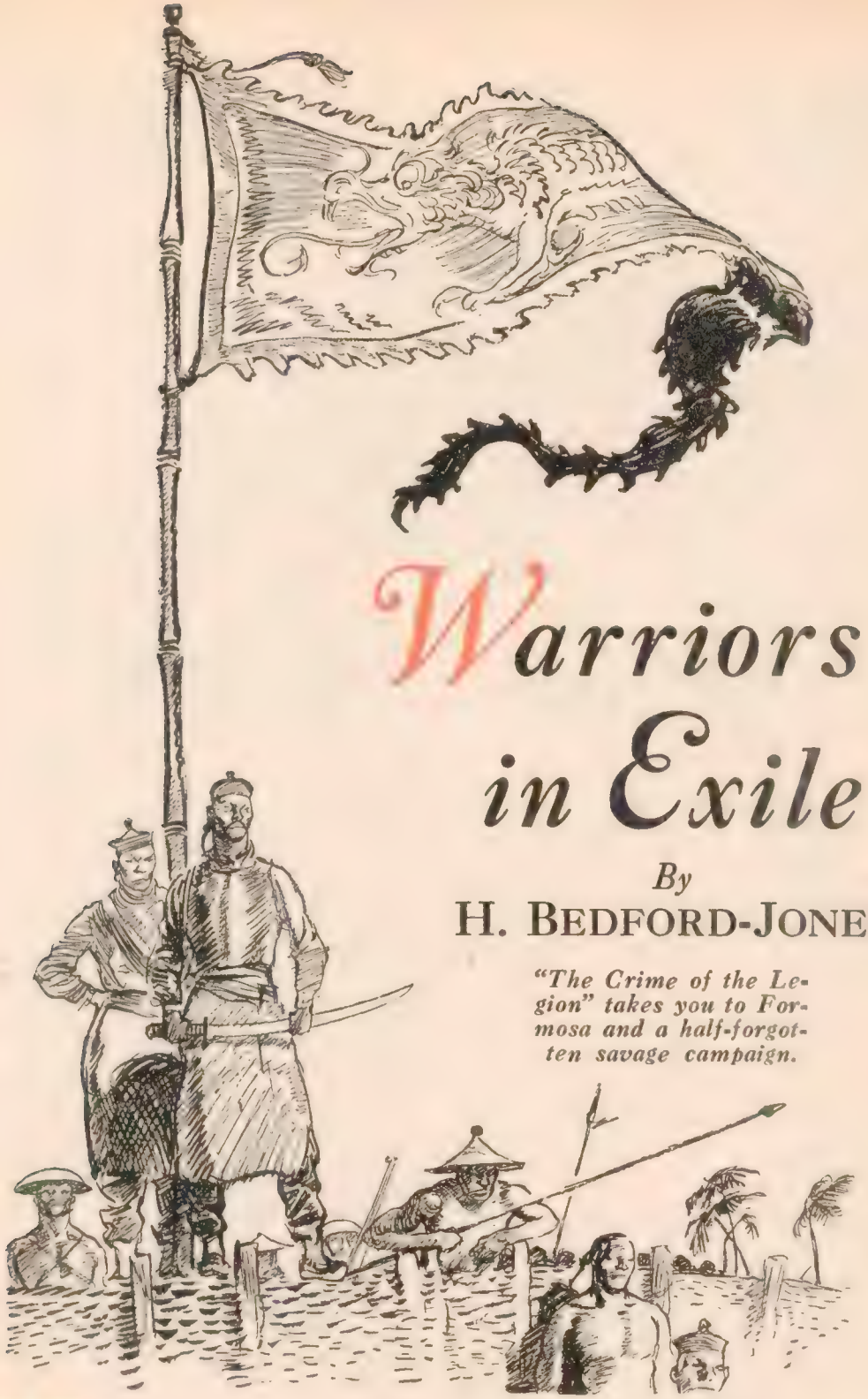
"A most remarkable fellow!" said Pierre, reading the letter again.

"I ought to have married him," decided the woman aloud.

"Eh, what's that? Ah, you will have your joke, *ma petite.* But I must inform the authorities at once. The treasure of Abdul the Damned—in a Turkish bath!"

He cackled loudly as he hurried to the telephone.

Another adventure of the Red Wolf of Arabia will appear in an early issue.



Warriors in Exile

By
H. BEDFORD-JONES

"The Crime of the Legion" takes you to Formosa and a half-forgotten savage campaign.

THE talk fell upon wars and rumors of wars.

About the table were gathered half a dozen men, here met in New York; all were former members of the Foreign Legion—*anciens* of the Legion, as they called themselves, who met every so often to gam and drink and recall old days.

Here was the dark, calm Porson, the red-haired Casey, the excitable Kramer, and others, notable men of the past, who now followed all sorts of queer occupations to earn a living in America.

And when they talked of war, they knew what they were talking about.

"It's all very well," grunted Kramer, "for you fellows to say that war is war; but it's not. Times have changed. In our day, it was considered dishonorable for a nation to make war without a formal declaration of war. Nowadays, the first thing anybody knows—*boum!* Airplanes overhead, and bombs falling."

"Right," said Casey with a nod. "A declaration of war is made with bombs."

"Wrong, if you think that's anything new," put in Porson, rolling a cigarette. "Why, even before our time, France did it."

Eyes went to him in shocked surprise.

"France?" said some one. "No, no, Porson! Not in modern times, at least."

Porson smiled darkly. "Maybe you don't call 1884 modern times? But if you knew the history of the Legion as you should, you'd know better. France was trying, with all kinds of weapons, to make China stand by a treaty—and was about a year doing it. That's how the Legion got into Formosa."

FORMOSA, eh? The name has vanished from maps, these days, since Japan grabbed the island and proceeded to remake it; but it has not vanished from history. More than one face around the table took on a frown. The arms of France had been soundly trounced on one occasion in Formosa—a subject best avoided.

"If," said somebody, "you're thinking about that affair at Tamsui—"

"I'm not," Porson promptly intervened. "The Legion wasn't there; that's why the marines got what they got. I was thinking about the hill fighting outside Kelung, in March of '85, when the Legion and the Bat d'Af worked together—"

The Bat d'Af! That stirred tongues, but mostly of curses. The *Bataillon d'Afrique,* that unhappy penal corps composed of the most hardened and obdurate rascals in the army, is nothing to get sentimental about. Plenty of men in the Legion could go back, or climb high; but the Bat d'Af, already in hell, had no Abraham's bosom in prospect anywhere.

"And," Porson added, "I was mostly thinking about Papa Weber."

"Papa Weber?" exclaimed a voice. "Why, I knew him! When I first joined up—that was back in 1897—he was at Bel Abbès; the grand old man of the Legion, they called him. He died a little while after. They said his heart was broken because he was unable to go on the Madagascar expedition with the Legion."

"His heart," said Porson, "was broken long before that. Yes, he had been in the Legion nearly thirty years, I heard. An Austrian, and some said a nobleman; no one ever knew for sure. He had refused time and again to be made an officer. He was a mystery—a tall, splendid old fellow, a great gentleman, a great criminal."

"Criminal?" spoke out some one indignantly. "You shouldn't say that of him, Porson! He's not forgotten. Even now they talk about him as the perfect Legionnaire, the man without fear and without reproach. Why, Papa Weber—"

"The noblest of men may be a great criminal," said Porson. "It all depends on the point of view. Let's get back to Formosa. That winter, if you remember, the French army in Kelung was hemmed in by immense Chinese forces. The French held the town and harbor, but the Chinese had them blocked there. Steep hills came up all about the town, cut by tremendous valleys. Lacking reinforcements,—the Legion had not yet arrived,—the French held on desperately. Then the Legion came—the fourth battalion of the second regiment, a thousand picked men. They landed and were assigned quarters in the Chinese town; a little creek separated them from the quarters of the Bat d'Af.

"Due to the rigorous climate of Formosa, the Legion kept its red pantaloons and its kepi without any neck-cover; thus looked like ordinary troops except for the white cartridge-box across the chest. Papa Weber, with his graying beard brushed out, was the lordliest of them all. And next door, so to speak, was the *Bataillon d'Afrique.*"

NO need to describe those next-door neighbors. Zephyrs, they were nicknamed; one and all criminals, hardened to the privations of the Sahara, kept in bounds by an iron discipline and by merciless punishments, holding their lives cheap. They were drawn from military prisons and civil prisons; they were the lowest of the low, but when it came to such superhuman exertions as the besieged French must undergo, they were the very men for the job.

So, for that matter, were those of the Legion.

They waited; they could do nothing else — day and night the rain kept up interminably, blocking any operation.

The day after their arrival, Papa Weber was strolling about, getting the situation in his mind. The heights occupied by the Chinese were only fifteen hundred yards distant. Fighting, thanks to the rain and bitter weather, had languished into outpost skirmishes. The high upland overlooking the town and harbor was broken into various peaks, which had been given names by the French—the Eagle's Nest, the Bamboo Fort, and so on.

From the Bamboo Fort flew a flag which had captured the imagination of all the troops, the flag of old China. It was a narrow triangle of yellow, three feet wide at the base, and tapering for its length of fifteen feet—yellow, with the blue Imperial Dragon cavorting along its folds. Mounted on an enormous bamboo, which had given the Chinese position its name, it was already a subject of bets galore among the men.

Papa Weber, spick and span, big pipe tucked into his grayish beard, came upon a group of his own men and of zephyrs engaged in a hot argument, punctuated by curses and blistering oaths. A corporal of the Bat d'Af was the central figure of the group, and was heaping blasphemy upon the Legion with no uncertain tongue.

With a fight imminent, Papa Weber shoved his way forward in order to keep his own comrades in hand. Sight of his broad chest with its Cross and medals drew a jeer from the zephyrs, as the voice of their corporal lifted acidly:

"Bet? I'll bet anything you like, anything on earth or in hell! The Bat d'Af will pull down that flag, and not the Legion. The Legion won't be anywhere near. I'll bet money or pay or wine or women or—"

"Why not let me propose a wager?"

The voice of Papa Weber, deep and grave and solid, checked the rabid outburst of the corporal. Then, as the two men crossed glances, a sudden startled silence held them.

He was not old at all, this Corporal Garnot. Crop-headed, his face all high, sharp angles, his blue eyes pools of vicious light, he seemed stamped with crime. A hard, lithe bundle of muscle, he was.

IN the sharp silence, those around perceived that these two men knew one another. Old Weber took the pipe from his mouth and spoke.

"So! Perhaps you're afraid of my wager?"

"Not of it nor of you," spat out Garnot. "That flag goes to the Bat d'Af!"

"It does not," said Weber. "It's an honorable flag. It's the flag of an ancient race. It goes to honorable men."

"Like you, I suppose?" sneered the younger man.

"Precisely. And I'll wager you, if you like—a bet between you and me. The loser goes down on his face before everybody and licks the boot of the winner; licks it clean."

Either the words, or the supreme contempt in them, stung Garnot almost past bearing. His face flamed; fury shook him.

"Done with you!" he returned. "You'll crawl, medals and all, and I'll daub my boots with cow-dung before you start licking them clean."

"You would," said Papa Weber. Just the two words, and they lashed like a whip. The corporal leaped at him, but two of the zephyrs pulled Garnot off before a blow could be struck. Replacing his pipe, puffing a blue cloud, Papa Weber turned his back and strode away.

With him was the comrade he loved most, another Austrian, a big bearded fellow like himself.

"I think, Karl," said Weber slowly, as they paced along, "that man is the most evil person in the world."

"A man doesn't get his corporal's stripes in the Bat d'Af by being an angel," said Karl. "You'd better look out for trouble. He's following us. If he picks a fight—"

"No danger," said Papa Weber, without so much as looking.

Corporal Garnot was, indeed, following them. He was alone, and as he approached it became evident he was in calmer mood. Karl offered to intervene and draw the other off, to avoid a row, but Papa Weber shook his head.

"No. Stand by. You do not understand; but it had to come. There will be no fight."

So Karl remained as a witness to the scene. Papa Weber turned and regarded Garnot calmly; the younger man halted.

"I thought you were in South America," Weber said in German. With a sneer, the other made reply in French.

"None of that; I've spoken French since I was a kid, and you know it. No, I'm not in South America and never was. That was just a yarn."

"Obviously," said Weber. "You killed your mother. I suppose you know it."

"I'd rather it had been you, you old sanctimonious goat!" snarled Garnot. This was the first intimation Karl had that the two might be related. "You, with all your talk of a great family and high name back in Austria—and a private in the Legion!"

"That's all I have left. It's enough," said Papa Weber gravely. Garnot thrust his face closer, his eyes vicious.

"Listen: I've found out a few things. I know who you were in Austria, and why you left; it's not such a pleasant story, either. I don't blame you for sinking your identity in the Legion. Going to make trouble for me, are you? Two can play at that game, you'll find!"

Papa Weber faced him impassively.

"Don't let your evil spirit carry you too far," he said slowly.

"Yah! That sounds like you," snapped Garnot. "Evil spirit, eh? Well, I'm going to pay you back—pay some of the debts I've owed you for a long time. If you'd stepped up to the scratch, I'd never have gone to prison. But no; you wouldn't do it."

Weber said nothing. The younger man straightened up and laughed; it was not a nice laugh to hear.

"You think that because you've disowned me, it's all over? Far from that, my good man. Far from that! Before

"You would," said Papa Weber. Just the two words, and they lashed like a whip. The corporal leaped at him.

I'm through, I'm going to make you and your damned Legion wish I'd never been born! And I'm going to collect that bet, and when it's collected the whole Legion will know that you're responsible for me. And that's not all, either."

With a flick of his shoulders, he swung away and strode off. Papa Weber looked after him calmly, then scratched a match and held it to the bowl of his pipe.

"Ja!" he said, turning. "It is worth something to be in the Legion, Karl. Now let us go on and find out about these American rifles the Chinese have—the ones that shoot so fast. Lee—is that the name? Or was it Winchester?"

KARL asked no questions about the scene just ended. It was evident, none the less, that this Corporal Garnot must be the son of Papa Weber; he was a curious man, this Karl, but he knew better than to ask his friend any questions. Weber was slow to be moved either by drink or by wrath, but once moved to action, he could be terrible.

A week passed, though not with inaction. Weber, veteran campaigner that he was, had no illusions regarding the situation; the officers, indeed, talked freely with him. The Chinese had proved they could fight, and their circle of positions held the French powerless. The ground, more perpendicular than level, was covered by a six-foot jungle of brush, cut only by winding trails.

"If the Chinese had artillery," said Karl one night, "they could blow us to hell. And rumor says they're getting Krupps."

"They are," Papa Weber confirmed grimly. "That's why we must act. Within three days you'll see something happen. It means work, a campaign of days in the brush, with grub and cartridges on our backs; no animals can follow the trails yonder. We'd need at least twenty thousand men for the job, but we've got two thousand who are better—the Legion and the Bat d'Af. It won't be done at one crack, either."

"Since you know everything," said Karl, who admired Weber with all his heart, "you must know how we'll attack."

"There's only one way, *ja!* They've neglected to seize the flat hill we call the Table; at least, they've no defenses there. It dominates the others. Once we have it, we can roll back their lines, outflank them, attack the Bamboo Fort and the others. A very simple matter."

Simple! Karl gasped. He, six years in the Legion, was no fool. To occupy the Table meant days of campaigning on almost impassable ground, against a determined and well-armed enemy. The Chinese were Fukien and Pichili men, picked regiments of the Imperial army. And no artillery could be used, except a mountain-gun or two the men might carry on their backs.

"I think," added Weber, "we'll get the orders Monday, and move out Tuesday."

He was right about that; but thanks to Corporal Garnot, he was also wrong.

AS the days passed, it became more and more difficult to restrain the zephyrs. Those hardened, hopeless men, now on the fighting line with the chance of winning the *galons* of first-class privates, within sight and sound of the enemy, chafed terribly at their idleness. Naturally, they knew nothing of the headquarters' plan of immediate action.

On the Monday morning an impudent, swaggering zephyr came into the lines of the Legion and halted at the door of the Chinese hut in which Karl and Papa Weber were quartered. He saluted them with a mocking jeer.

"A message for the noble Herr von Strull," he said, and tossed a folded paper into the hut. "Otherwise, Papa Weber. Keep your eye on the Bat d'Af cantonments for the next hour, and you'll see some fun, you frogs of the Legion!"

He swaggered off again. Papa Weber picked up the folded paper, opened it, and read the scrawled words: *"Get ready to pay up the bet, full measure!"*

He crumpled the paper and threw it away, with anger smoldering in his eyes. Herr von Strull, eh? Garnot was keeping his word. He meant to tell the world about Papa Weber. God knows what he meant to do!

"What did the rat mean, about keeping an eye on their cantonments?" asked Karl.

"We'd better do it, and learn," Weber rejoined. "With those devils, anything is possible. They'd join the Chinese and fight against us, if they had the chance."

Later, Karl was to remember this prediction.

They saw the thing when it happened. A sudden commotion in the cantonments, in the outer works; whistles arose, shouts, a gusty wave of cheers and ribald comments, orders from furious officers disdained. A mutiny among

Illustrations by Jeremy Cannon

"Remember that corporal of the zephyrs who led out that squad of eleven fools—and never showed up again? We found him, dead."

the zephyrs? No. Something more strange, more amazing.

A corporal led off, and others followed him—eleven men in all, full armed. They left the lines at a trot, and inside five minutes vanished completely in the brush. Corporal Garnot and eleven men, going to attack the Bamboo Fort on their own!

They were gone; but behind them it was like smoking tinder to powder. As one man, the *Bataillon d'Afrique* leaped to arms. Officers came on the run, the Legion was ordered into ranks; buglers, ordinarily silent by reason of the proximity of the Chinese, blared out orders. The zephyrs were one vast confusion of furious men, demanding to support their comrades. Only when the order was given to open fire on any who fell out of rank, did they sullenly submit.

Aides dashed back and forth between the lines and headquarters. Now and then, glimpses of Garnot and his eleven men were seen amid the brush, heading straight for their objective—an utterly impossible thing, it seemed. Their hand forced, the staff conferred hastily. At length came orders. Rations for four days—a yell greeted the word.

The zephyrs marched. The Legion marched. And there began a mad and desperate attack which was to last, not four days, but six.

Winding paths by ravines and defiles and jungled hillsides, by sun and rain; skirmishes with unseen Chinese placed in ambush, bullets streaming death into the white files. Onward and upward against incredible odds, by footpaths that not even mules could follow, or no paths at all. Days of it.

THEN, gaining the Chinese positions above, quick rushes, and hand-to-hand work, and the surprise of bursting shells. The Chinese had their Krupps in place, and this would have ended matters once and for all, except for a typically Chinese incident. The first shells burst; but only the first. The later ones screamed in the air and did not burst. A few shells, sent with the guns, had fuses in place. For the others, fuses had been delivered separately—and the Chinese did not know how to put them in place.

The one little mountain-gun which was carried along and put together on the heights, landed its first shell smack in the Chinese battery. Gunners were blown into the air. The Krupps were silenced. The positions were rushed.

And with a portion of the uplands in French hands, the days of attack ended. The troops were utterly exhausted, and the blinding rain of Formosa descended in a flood to halt the advance and save the face of the staff. Now these upper positions were consolidated and held. Nothing more could be done. The Dragon flag still waved on Fort Bamboo.

Once, during the fighting, Garnot and his men had been in full sight, climbing the lower scarps toward the fort; that was all. Three of the men were found, headless and mutilated corpses. The others came in, dispirited and half dead—all but Corporal Garnot. He had sworn never to come in, they said. Finding how mad and impossible was his ambition, he had kept on alone. By this time he was dead, or captured.

"And a good job," said Karl. Back in the Kelung quarters, he puffed at his pipe and nodded at Papa Weber. The zephyrs were holding the newly won positions, in the driving rain that fell day and night. "A good job. You're glad, no doubt."

PAPA WEBER looked at him, pawed the big beard, and shook his head.

"Glad? If it were true, I'd be relieved, perhaps; not glad. But I do not think that man is dead. He is too evil to die so easily. Wait and see."

They waited, waited a whole month; they could do nothing else. Sporadic fighting went on, but the hill paths were slippery mud, the skies opened to check any real efforts, and a horrible fear had begun to grip headquarters—fear of a major disaster here.

For, in the army, the dreaded cholera was taking toll, and fever with it.

Day and night the rain kept up interminably, blocking any operation. The positions gained were under sniping fire most of the time. The Chinese had received more troops, the French had not; reinforcements from Europe came slowly. The mortality among the officers had been enormous. Only one possibility remained: evacuation.

This meant a terribly black eye to French prestige. The only alternative seemed to be utter destruction of the whole force. A single battery of artillery might have effected this destruction, but the Chinese shells refused to burst. They still had no fuses in place. The only hope of saving face was to strike one sharp blow, win the positions on the circling heights, defeat the Chi-

The zephyrs led the assault; they went into and over the defenses — a bloody, desperate, hand-to-hand affair.

nese—and then clear out. But, if the rain kept up, if the cholera kept on, this would be impossible.

Companies of the Legion relieved the exhausted zephyrs along the outer defenses. Together, Papa Weber and Karl fought and smoked and endured. Together, they eyed the Chinese works being constructed here and there; the activity of the yellow men was amazing and disturbing. Papa Weber frowned, as they talked together one day.

"Unless we drive them out quickly, we're lost," he observed. "They're constructing new positions that will dominate the town and the bay. Once they get artillery up there, we're done for. Luckily, Corporal Garnot is totally ignorant of artillery."

Karl's eyes opened wide. "Garnot? What do you mean? We've heard nothing from him."

"Are you blind?" said Papa Weber scornfully. "Look at the positions they're laying out! Anyone can see with half an eye that some one who knows his business is directing those operations. Garnot reached his objective, that's all. Instead of losing his head, he used it."

"A Frenchman, fighting against the French?" gaped Karl.

"Bah! The devil has no nationality."

FEBRUARY was wearing itself out in storms. The cholera made worse inroads, hitting the Legion hard. The marines were reduced to skeleton companies. Day by day, the Chinese could be seen making progress. They were getting artillery up to their new positions now.

Then the news spread—not unexpected by Papa Weber and the Legion. The staff had decided to attack at all costs, with every available man.

Red sunset, clear moonlight; the rains and storm had ended, at least temporarily. Before dawn the columns were off and away. Radiant sunlight welcomed them. The objective was precisely that which Papa Weber had foreseen from the beginning; to capture the height called the Table, and then roll back the Chinese from the flank.

"Three days," said Weber, as they followed the winding paths. "Make up your mind to it, Karl. This is March 4th. On the 7th, we take the Bamboo Fort."

Karl merely grunted, as the first volleys rang out ahead. . . .

All that day it was a long, savage, stubborn fight through the brush, but with no close work. The French prepared methodically for what must come, the Chinese consolidated their defenses along the crest of the Table.

"Tomorrow we'll have it hot," said Papa Weber, when they camped that night.

True enough, and a fine clear day. Off before dawn, the column splitting up, running into a hot fire as Chinese halted the advance and then fell back. On and on, part of the Legion working around; a road had to be hacked through the brush for the men with mountain-guns. Weber, at this work with Karl, paused abruptly and leaned on his ax.

"Karl! Did you hear anything? I thought I heard a voice calling me."

"Nothing," grunted Karl wonderingly.

THE work went on; at noon, the guns were in position and opened. The zephyrs led the assault, the Legion sustained them. They went into and over the defenses—a bloody, desperate, hand-to-hand affair. When it was over—the fort cleared, the routed Chinese in full flight and the Legion mopping up, Karl and Papa Weber came face to face.

"Well!" exclaimed Karl. "You were right. You are always right. I saw him."

"And I felt him." Weber showed his tunic, torn by two balls. "He did his best to get me, *ja!* Well, my friend, say nothing about this; no one else recognized him."

At four that afternoon, the Tricolor replaced the Dragon on the captured positions. To those down below in the town—within hearing distance—the bugles of the column saluted with the *"au drapeau"* call, announcing victory. The Table was captured.

THE night brought rain in a scant dash. The wounded were sent back to Kelung. With morning, stormy and cloudy, the operations went on; the ground ahead was occupied, the skirmish lines were pushed ahead, the Chinese lines were rolled back. All went forward methodically, but when evening came on with heavy rain, Karl perceived once again that Papa Weber had been right. The final push on Fort Bamboo would not come until morning.

That night, with the wind howling and the rain coming in gusts, Karl and Weber were on advanced post. It was past midnight. Karl, peering up at the precipitous heights facing them, shivered.

"It's an impossibility," he declared. "That ground is horrible. Dawn is coming on, and the reserves haven't come up from Kelung. The ammunition is nearly gone."

"The reserves will bring plenty," said Papa Weber calmly. They were posted on the very edge of a deep defile. The opposite side, not thirty feet away, was as far beyond reach as the moon. "The rain is passing, the stars are coming out. All goes well."

"All goes well!" The words were flung back like an echo—German words. The two men started, separated, took cover. A mocking laugh came across the gulf to them.

"All goes well, very true! So it's you, Papa Weber!" came a voice they both knew. "Haven't you a word of greeting for me?"

"Traitor!" A guttural flood of German escaped Weber. It drew another laugh.

"Tomorrow I'll have better luck in sending you to hell," came the voice. "And do you know what'll happen? I'll fix you and your blasted Legion! And all the world will know who did it, too —Herr von Strull!"

An oath broke from Papa Weber. A shot made response, from opposite—the bullet came within half an inch of Weber's head. A mocking laugh, and then silence.

"That devil has some scheme," said Weber, wiping sweat from his wide forehead. "He has some plan. He'll use his name, my name; he means—*ach, Gott!* I am sick, Karl. Call a relief."

The relief came. Papa Weber was sent off to the ambulance section. But when Karl followed, in the gray dawn, to see what was wrong with his friend, Papa Weber was not there at all. He had simply vanished from sight.

With the bugles sounding the advance, Karl had no chance to investigate further.

The reserves came up, ammunition was handed out, the column pushed forward up the slopes. It was incredible work. The Chinese maintained a heavy fire. Against it, the lines went up in two divisions, now descending into ravines, now pressing up steep hillflanks. Time after time, halts must be made to hack a way. Time after time, the only means of progress was by a bamboo ladder which the men must mount singly.

Yet they kept on, ever mounting. It was a race between the Legion and the zephyrs, and new bets were made, old ones were renewed, about that flag on the Bamboo Fort. By eight in the morning, one column was up, the other was halted. Up, and before the first Chinese entrenchments.

A terrible fire burst upon them. The first lines of the Legion were decimated, officers went down, but the others pressed on and over. At the third line of trenches, the Legion recoiled before the concentrated fire poured into them. A lieutenant and a handful of men won through and over. Others came up. At this instant, Karl perceived the figure of Papa Weber. He had suddenly appeared, over on the left, a squad of the Legion behind him. They mounted the parapet and poured bullets into the Chinese, who broke and fled.

BUT the zephyrs, in an equally ferocious assault from the flank, won into the fort, and hauled down the flag.

"Name of the devil!" cried Karl amazedly, coming up to Papa Weber as he stood panting among the group who had come with him. "Where did you spring from?"

"He sprang just in time to get us here," cried the sergeant in charge, clapping Weber on the back. "Ha! We found him alone, and he showed us which way to come. And what do you think? Remember that corporal of the zephyrs who led out that squad of eleven fools—and never showed up again? We found him, too. Dead."

"Well, well, get to work and stop talking," broke in Papa Weber. The others scattered.

Karl came up to his friend.

"What does it mean?" he demanded. "You never reported to the ambulance section. Where did you go?"

Papa Weber was in bad shape. He had a bullet through one arm, his uniform was in rags from the thorns, and his face was gray with exhaustion. Perhaps not from exhaustion alone, for his eyes held a terrible inner anguish, and all his barriers were suddenly down. He spoke to Karl as to an old and trusted friend, without evasion.

"The job was mine; it had to be done. I was responsible for him, as he said; that is, in the beginning. I hold an honored name, Karl. The Legion is the only thing I have left in life. It was not for the sake of my name—it was for the Legion—"

He staggered, close to collapse.

Karl caught him, steadied him, helped him to where the surgeon was at work among the other wounded; and once there, Papa Weber slumped down into unconsciousness.

LATER he was himself again, with all barriers up. Once or twice Karl timidly ventured on the subject, only to be rebuffed. Afterward, when they stood together at the rail of the *Tonkin* and looked back at the blue peaks of Formosa fading in the far distance, Karl made one more effort to understand.

"That day—you remember, after the Bamboo Fort was taken—you said some queer things to me. I'd like to understand. Then there was the night before, after Corporal Garnot spoke with us. Where did you go, off there in the darkness? You did not go looking for him?"

"Karl, you're a *dumbkopf!*" Papa Weber turned and surveyed his old friend, that big splay beard of his all bristling. Then he smiled slightly. "Don't be absurd, my friend. Where did I go? I went off in the bush and was sick, but I fell in with the advance. With the third company. Look in the records; it's all there. Now, my friend, I command you never to mention the matter to me again. Never mention the name of Corporal Garnot again. It is finished, ended for ever. Leave it so."

And Karl knew better than to disobey.

PORSON'S voice fell silent. The picture of the two bearded Austrians of the Legion faded away; the men about the table stirred, lifted their glasses, exchanged glances and comments. A bad business, that Formosa affair, somebody observed; still, the Legion had done its work in the good old style—

"But—good Lord, Porson!" burst out Kramer suddenly. "It's plain enough now why you said Papa Weber was a great criminal. Do you actually mean that he killed this fellow, his own son, to save the Legion from dishonor?"

Porson gave him a level glance.

"You've heard the story," he said in his calm, dispassionate way. "You know all that I know; draw your own conclusions. It seems fairly evident to me. Not, mind you, that I think Papa Weber a criminal! Some might think him so, but I believe he was a great man. That's why I said 'a great criminal'."

"Oh, bother your play on words!" exclaimed somebody down the table. "There was no crime in that. Look at Jephtha and his daughter, or whatever the Bible story is; look at a dozen other such things in history. Yes, you're right. Criminal? Not a bit of it. One thing, though, I don't quite see. How the devil do you know so much about what happened and what was said? The Formosa campaign was long before your time."

Porson nodded quietly.

"True. However, there was one man in the Legion guilty of almost the greatest crime any Legionnaire can commit," he rejoined slowly. "I think we'd all agree that there's nothing so base or low-down in the old corps as to learn a comrade's story, gain his trust—and then tell. That's what Karl did—Papa Weber's friend Karl. Karl is dead long ago, and it's just as well. But Karl told me, and not in confidence either."

"Who was this Karl?" asked Casey, leaning forward. "What was his name?"

Porson smiled that tight-lipped smile of his.

"That," he responded pleasantly, "is one of the things we don't do, *mon ami*."

Another colorful story in this fine series will be a feature of our next issue.

This Fighter Was

ONLY a bum, coming in with his head leaning down, trying to listen to voices whispering—only, there weren't any voices. A poor punch-drunk pug with a busted face, probably from the ring across the street. A lot of those hang around Barney's; any kind of a bum can always make a fiver, once in a while, if he can take it. Sometimes one of the regular prelim' boys takes a powder or gets hurt or something, and they'll take anybody then, even a no-good down-and-outer like this number. You go four rounds, or maybe six. If you can stand up and take it, you get your finif. If you can't, you get a kick out of the back door.

Just a punch-drunk ham of a pug, he was; and nobody would have noticed him, coming into a place like Barney's, except maybe Speed Donnersley. Maybe Speed was a little drunk, but he noticed. Trust a newspaper man to catch on.

So this pug rolled in and shoved his way up toward the bar where Fat Mike was on duty. He never said a word. He just stood there, leaning his head down and not even looking at Mike, and rolling a little on his feeet. Washed up, he was; punch-drunk, with his face all cut up, and a little blood left in his eye, and his nose flat and the flowers on his ears. The voices must have been whispering pretty loud then, because he just stood there, saying in a funny voice:

"Hey—hey, listen! Gimme—"

Across the bar, Fat Mike handed a wink to the gang.

"Okay, punk," Mike said. "Whaddya want, huh? Spill it."

Fat Mike was like that—a hard guy. You've got to be tough to run a joint like Barney's. Mike said that, but the bum just looked up at him, surprised.

"Huh?" said the bum. "Who, me? I wanna coupla cows. I wanna coupla horses, too. Mebbe a—mebbe some chickies and a coupla—"

Mike got a laugh out of that.

"Jeez," said Mike, "whaddya know, huh? Listen at the poor mug. A coupla cows, he wants. An' a coupla horses, too. Jeez, kin ya beat it, the poor punk!"

The bum looked at him again, queer in the eyes and queer in the head, but he only grinned.

"Looka that pan, hey?" said one of the tough-mug chauffeurs. "Who pasted ya, feller? Somebody musta hung one on him wit' a handful o' knucks. Jeez, what a pan he's got."

The whole bunch of them took a look at the bum's face where it was all cut up, and they thought that was funny. But Fat Mike didn't want to waste any time, so he said:

"Well, whaddya want, ya poor sap? I aint got all night."

And the stumble-bum gave him that fishy look again and said in a voice that was like a little kid's voice:

"Okay, Mister. Okay, I know it was in the papers. Everybody seen it in the papers. She seen it, too—in the papers. But it don't mean nothin', Mister—nothin' at all."

"Cripes!" said Fat Mike. "De guy's nuts. Bughouse. Hey, you, get outa here, see? I gotta woik, aint I? I aint got no time fer a guy what's nuts. I gotta keep dis bar woikin."

Then somebody shoved the bum away from the bar, and he stood there, balancing a little and almost stumbling over his own feet, and leaning way down with his head to hear those voices, which must have been pretty bad about then.

SPEED DONNERSLEY was still watching the bum. He called out to him: "Hey, Milky! C'mon over here, Milky, an' have one on me."

The bum turned around, grinning like a kid. Fat Mike looked over the bar at Speed, sitting there at his table where he always sits on Saturday night.

"Frien' o' yours, Mr. Donnersley? Okay, only keep him outa the way, see? I gotta woik."

"Come on, Milky," said Speed, and the bum came rolling over to his table.

Queer eyes, this bum had. They were so blue he looked sort of sick, and they had angles around them, and the hair on his eyebrows was all worn off where they had pounded him in the ring. That's the worst part about the fight game; it gets your eyes first. Lots of good fighters go bad like that.

Different

Just a poor punch-drunk stumble-bum—but you will not soon forget this story told of him by the able author of "Death on Talisman Mountain" and "Springfield 00078596."

By
FULTON GRANT

Wood Engravings by
L. F. Grant

"Jeez, Mr. Donnersley, I betcha wouldn't know who this mug is —the one with a busted neck."

"Dey all seen it in the papers," he was saying when he came over. "But it don't mean nothin', Mister. Nothin' at all. Only, I aint gonna talk, see? Hell, I wouldn' say a woid, Mister!"

And then he gave Speed that funny look, as if he had just remembered something. He looked up at him, queer, under his funny eyebrows, and he said:

"Where d'ya get that 'Milky' stuff, hey? Whaddya wanna get outa me, hey? You lemme alone, Mister. I never seen you before. Who the hell are ya, hey?"

They had all forgotten the bum then. All the truck-pushers and chauffeurs and the queer birds you wouldn't know about who hang out in Barney's, they had all forgotten about him then. Fellers like that haven't any time for a poor old bum with a busted face. There were maybe a hundred of them—Barney's does a big business after eleven o'clock.

"Where d'ya get that 'Milky' stuff, hey? You lemme alone, Mister. I never seen you before."

But Speed Donnersley couldn't forget him.

"Me? I put it in the papers, Milky," he said. "I was the kid, Milky! Remember the kid? That was me. Now you sit down and tell me, hey? Suppose you just sit down and have a drink and tell me about it. Maybe we'll put it in the papers again, Milky. Maybe she'd like to read it the way it ought to be, hey? Maybe you ought to get a new deal, Milky. She'd like that, wouldn't she, hey? That was a long time ago, now, Milky."

It was queer what happened to the bum then. He began to stand up. There was a light came into his face, like the sudden gold that comes into the clouds at sunset; there was joy all over him for a minute, as though the voices were talking loud, now, and maybe singing to him.

"Yeah," he said. "That was a long time ago. A helluva long time ago. . . . I almost forgot—"

Then the light went out of his face, and he pushed out his hand at Speed and said: "You lemme alone, Mister. I aint never seen you before. You aint got nuthin' on me. I didn't do nobody any harm."

And then he rolled away down to the end of Barney's place and fell into a chair with his face on the table and his arms all wrapped around it. Just a bum, he was. Just a poor stumble-bum of a punching-bag that somebody had knocked hell out of, for a finif. Maybe he was having a snowstorm—you never can tell.

Speed watched him a little while; then he shook his head as if he didn't want to believe what he saw and he called out to Fat Mike at the bar.

"Gimme a double whisky, Mike," he called out. "Make it a coupla whiskies. Better make it three of 'em."

Mike came around the bar, then.

"Listen, Mr. Donnersley," he said. "You gotta lotta whisky. You're gonna get plastered. If you get plastered you're gonna lose your job, Mr. Donnersley. You don't need no more to drink—"

Speed said:

"Shut up, Mike, an' gimme a drink. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a publican who goes noble. Incongruous and inconsequential and futile. Futile, that's what it is. Futile is from the Latin, *futilis*—means that which pours out easily. In the vulgar idiom, Mike, it means no go, see? Whaddya care if I get drunk? Whaddya care if I lose my job? It's my job, isn't it? I gotta right to lose it if I wanna. You gotta go get me a drink on account I saw a vision. A man what has a vision's gotta right to get plastered, aint he?"

Fat Mike stared at Speed.

"Yeah?" he said, because this was all over his head. Then he said it again: "Yeah—oh, yeah, Mr. Donnersley. I gotcha." Which was a lie. "I gotcha, Mr. Donnersley. Anything you say—" So he went over and poured the whiskies.

IT takes a lot of minutes to make ten years. The things that can happen in ten years can make you pretty glad or pretty sick when you think of them. And Speed Donnersley, with his whisky

and his vision and his eyes turned inside out, looking into himself, could see every minute of those five million minutes.

And he was pretty sick about it.

A BRIGHT young kid, Speed was then, right out of college with a job on the old New York *Globe*, which was a big paper before Old Man Flagg got sick and died. You never know what you'll do when you're just a new cub on a newspaper. Maybe it will be just a lot of mixed assignments. Maybe it will be a police-court beat. Maybe they'll park you at a hospital, or hand you a flock of hotels to watch, or hand you a bunch of big shots to interview, or maybe let you sit out in the cold room next to Big John Farley's office, waiting for a hot one that almost never comes. Big John was the chief dick on the homicide squad in those days, and a good man, too. That's where they started Speed Donnersley, the fresh kid out of college, trying to be a newspaper man.

But Speed didn't stay there long. Not Speed.

It was about 1925 they first turned Speed over to Bob Ellon, the *Globe's* star sports-writer. Old Bob noticed the kid and liked him, and wanted to make him into a good man on the sports-desk; so Old Man Flagg turned him over. That was how it started. That was how Speed Donnersley got to know them all: Tex Rickard and Jimmy Weld and Izzy Weinstein and all the rest. That was how he got to know the pugs and the ball-players and the fellows they call the "sporting fraternity," who used to sit in the back rooms of the speak-easies and figure out who fights who and who gets paid, if any.

Prize-fighters are a queer crowd, and the public never will know much about them, on account of the press. It's the newspaper men who make them what they are—the press and the sporting fraternity. They've created a myth about pugs. A pug is supposed to act like a plug-ugly. All he has to do is to fight and get drunk and spend his dough like a wild man, and then pass out of the picture when somebody wallops him and takes his title. And then, about ten years later, some sports-writer "discovers" him, dead and washed up some alley, and they hold a "jubilee" for him and take up a collection to bury him, and run headlines about "Poor old So-and-So, He Was a Good Guy when He Was Right."

Pugs are supposed to act like that.

Most of them do. Some don't. Look at Tunney. He wouldn't play that way, and the newspapers never let up on him. They slapped him down, and they laughed him off, and they kidded him about his Shakespeare and his white flannels. But could they get him down? He could take it—and did. He was going places, that one—and did.

But most of them don't and can't, largely on account of the press boys and the so-called sporting fraternity.

Just about that time there was a pug coming along. His name was Quinn. They had christened him Jonathan, which was no use at all to the fight-fans, so they called him Milky because he came from a farm up-state, and his papa used to raise cows. Also they called him Milky because his eyes were a funny blue color, very like skimmed milk. He was a pretty good-looking youngster with tow-colored hair and a hick grin, and nobody thought much about him at all until one day somebody stuck him in the ring to make a set-up for the Champ, who was suffering from a long lay-off and needed some easy kale. It was an overweight fight and didn't count for the championship. But it counted, just the same, because this Milky Quinn knocked the Champ out of the ring in three terrible rounds.

Speed Donnersley saw that fight. Speed "discovered" Milky Quinn that night. Speed Donnersley, the "kid" on the old *Globe*, wrote a wow of a story about this new "wonder fighter"—a story which never saw the light of print, because of old Bob Ellon. Bob was a cagy old-timer, and he wouldn't let Speed's story go through. He said it must be either luck or a fixed fight, because no young ham like that could kayo the Champ on the level. Speed was just a kid, he said, and getting over-enthusiastic.

So he said, and he stuck to it. But Speed knew better.

•

MAYBE you don't remember that fight. Probably you didn't see it. But what happened was that the Champ hit this kid Milky with everything but Columbus Circle, and the kid just stood up and took it and asked for more. He couldn't box with the Champ. He didn't have half the Champ's stuff, but he had guts, in a large fat package, and when the Champ got tired pasting him around, the kid hit him with a one-two to the solar-plexus and the jaw that sent him

"I'm buying a newspaper," Bubo was saying. "And I need a man. Does it interest you?"

through the ropes right into Speed Donnersley's lap.

Speed was pretty sore when old Bob wouldn't run his build-up story. He went to see this Milky Quinn, and found him to be a nice, quiet lad with honesty in his face, and a quiet smile, and not a tough guy at all.

"No sir," said Milky, "I don't think it was luck. And it wasn't fixed, sir, honest it wasn't. You see, I'm stronger than the Champ. I've always lived clean. I can box a little, too. It was old Mike Donlin who taught me. Mike was sorta down and out and on the bum awhile back, and Pop gave him a job on the farm as hired man, and that was how he saw me and taught me a coupla things. If the Champ will give me another shot —at the title—I think I could take him again, sir."

A nice kid, this Milky Quinn, a nice decent boy trying to earn enough money to buy back his pop's farm from a real-estate loan-shark. It made swell copy, but old Bob wouldn't let Speed run the stuff. Speed wondered whether old Bob was jealous of him. Maybe he was.

"I think I could take him!"

Milky did take him, too. That happened a year later. They fought in the Garden this time. The place was jammed. At first it looked like a slaughter, like a baby trying to fight a tiger. But round by round as that fight went on, the baby began to grow up and the tiger began to get tamer. Don't make any mistake about the Champ; he was good. Too good, maybe. Knew too much. Knew all the answers. There never was a middle-weight like that Champ. He could box a hive of bees and never let one get on his face. But all that didn't do any good, because the more he hit Milky Quinn, the more the kid came in for it.

It went twelve rounds, that fight. Everybody wondered why the kid didn't just sit down and die. They yelled for the referee to stop the slaughter. But in that twelfth round, the kid got up from the canvas where the Champ had knocked him for the tenth time, and he was different. He swiped the blood off his face. He crouched low. He started bobbing and weaving. And all of a sud-

den, just before the gong, he let out a yell.

"Here's li'l' Esther!" he yelled, and he hit the Champ with that old one-two to the solar plexus and the jaw, and the Champ took a ride in the air and landed in the press box.

Nobody ever saw anything else like it. Nobody ever will again, maybe. It was better than the Johnson-Ketchell go. It was better than Nelson-Wolgast. And it gave Speed Donnersley his first great story.

For old Bob Ellon died that night—right at the ringside old Bob died. Speed Donnersley wrote his story.

> . . . . Like the ancient giant of myth who drew his strength from mother earth, this boy called Milky Quinn draws a miraculous power from the loam of his father's farm. There are no superlatives to describe what we saw last night. There is no trade-name for the demonstration of courage and ruggedness and great-heartedness we witnessed. And when he shouted his boyish war-cry, "Here's li'l' Esther!" it was like the apex of a great crescendo in the D-Minor Symphony.

Speed wrote that. It was his beginning. The beginning of two youngsters—two kids getting a break. The fall of two old men. The Alpha and the Omega:

Jonathan (Milky) Quinn, Champion of the World.

Francis X. (Speed) Donnersley, Sports Editor of the *Globe*.

WITH Bob Ellon dead at the ringside, of heart-failure, they had to put somebody in his job. Speed was a kid. Imagine being an editor at twenty! But that story he wrote was flashed over the entire world. It was called one of the greatest pieces of newspaper copy ever written. He got the Audbach Award for it. He got the Spindler Prize in Journalism for it. It was included in a great anthology of fine journalistic writing for the year. Somebody remembered that Speed had "discovered" Milky Quinn. Old Man Flagg called him into the office and talked about "major responsibilities on the shoulders of a very young man." And Speed walked out of Flagg's office, Editor of Sports.

Speed was twenty. Milky Quinn was twenty-three. . . .

They were pally for a while, in the way that a sports-writer gets pally with a pug. Not too pally, either. But this Quinn was a little different: He wasn't tough. He was a nice kid with a big heart. He didn't hit the booze; he didn't go for the women. He didn't act like the traditional mythological pug. Hell, no; this kid Milky was going places—as a man.

And there was a reason. The reason was called Esther.

Just Esther, was her name; and her last name was Brown.

ESTHER BROWN came from up Herkimer way near where Milky's father had his farm. They had known each other for years, had grown up together. Milky never even knew just when he began to love Esther. Nor *vice versa*. She didn't exactly approve of Milky's being a pug, but when he won the championship, they got married and she was happy.

Mrs. Champion Quinn—the Champ's "little woman."

Speed Donnersley wrote:

> No night-club dames for the new Champ. There is a little brown-eyed girl from upstate, soft and lovely and proud of her man. Says Milky: "We'll be going back and settle down on the farm when I've finished my year as champion." Which is a new note for leather-pushers to live up to.

Speed Donnersley wrote that—ten years ago.

That was all right. Everything was all right—except one thing, and that was Speed's swelled head. Put a boy in a man's job, and you've likely got a swelled head on your hands; put a kid of twenty at the head of an important newspaper department, and you've got a bad-actor in the making. Too many banquets, too many friends, too many temptations, too many chances. You wouldn't promote a corporal to be a brigadier-general.

And then there was the "sporting fraternity." That's a queer phrase—"sporting fraternity." It's a newspaper man's euphemism. They aren't sporting, and they aren't fraternal. They would cut your throat for a dime and sell the blood for a dollar a drop and use the change to send flowers to your wife and kiddies. Not all, but many of them.

And they moved in on Milky Quinn.

Quinn's manager wasn't a bad guy—his first manager, that is. His name was Ike Green; and while he might easily have hidden behind a corkscrew, there were some crooked things he drew the

line at—such as biting the hand that fed him: Milky's hand.

The way it all happened was this: Tex Rickard was dead. Jimmy Weld was dead. Izzy Weinstein had quit the game. The business of promoting fights had fallen into new hands, not all good and not all bad, either, but all new, green, untried and especially ignorant of the "sporting fraternity." The bird who chiseled in on Milky's manager was called Bubo Stearn, and they have a long record of him down at the D.A.'s office. Money talks—especially when there is an army of strong-arms and Tommy-guns somewhere behind the money.

The mistake Bubo Stearn made was not guessing about Milky. When they had a conference one night, they got out some figures, and they figured that they could build up odds of twelve to five on the new Champ by proper advertising. That would be easy. And it would be just as easy to have the Champ fold up in the tenth round, which would return $240 for every hundred dollars of wise money. Good, safe, intelligent odds. Nobody could smell a fix.

Only, Milky didn't like that.

What happened was pretty, in its way. Milky went into action about the second half-hour when Bubo began to get tough. When the six strong-arms and Bubo finally crawled out of the door, they looked like they had been through a meat-chopper. The only reason they didn't shoot Milky was because he was a valuable property, and you don't shoot a valuable property. You do other things.

So they did.

THE next "conference" was a small, intimate dinner. At the dinner were Bubo Stearn and Speed Donnersley.

"You're the best newspaper man in the business," Bubo was saying. "I'm buying a newspaper, and I need a man. Does it interest you?"

"Some," admitted Speed. But that was an understatement.

"Well, you gotta job, kid. And just to make it sure, here's a check for twenty-five grand. Now there's a little job I wish you'd do for me—"

What the hell would Speed care? It wasn't dishonest. Not *very* dishonest. Mostly it was the truth. Nobody but Speed could have done it. Nobody's column but Speed's was read by so many millions of readers. Nobody but Speed was imitated, quoted and talked about so much; nobody was thought to be such a sure-thing prophet in the sports world.

And so he began the campaign:

CHAMPION QUINN NOT REAL CHAMP MATERIAL. . . . FARMERS GET MUSCLE-BOUND: CHAMP A FARMER AT HEART. . . . DOES THE CHAMP HIGH HAT THE GALLERY? . . . . NEW GAG FOR FIGHTERS: CHAMP GOES TO NIGHT SCHOOL. . . . GONE ARE THE DAYS OF JOHN L. SULLIVAN: CHAMP A SISSY. . . .

And so on, and so on, and so on.

No, it wasn't dishonest. It was more or less true. It began to bring groans from the gallery gods. It began to get boos from them. Other newspapers picked it up and began kidding. The kidding got worse and worse. Imagination is a queer thing; newspaper men have it too. And out of their imagination was born a set of imaginary stories that sent Champ Quinn's popularity down into the basement.

BUT he didn't care. He just grinned, and slugged, and won his three fights that year. He was in the money. He had bought his farm back. He had a nice little wife. What did he care?

Secretly, though, down underneath his crust of good humor, Jonathan Quinn did care. Everybody likes popularity. Everybody wants to be admired. Nobody likes to be booed. He cared.

Then Bubo Stearn did his stuff; the stage was set.

They had a dinner for the Champ. They had drinks at the dinner, but the Champ didn't drink—only lemonade. But somebody slipped something into Milky Quinn's lemonade which was stronger than booze. It was something that magnifies the ego, that makes you look down at all the "little men" around you and thank God you aren't as they are. It is something they use a lot of in the Far Eastern countries where there is a lot of suffering, and where people need to feel they are bigger and better because they know damned well they aren't. In one form they call it hasheesh. In another form they call it *bangha*. In still another it is called *gangha*.

And it hit the Champ pretty hard.

After that, the rest was easy. He drank. He smoked. He drank more. And more and more. He got roaring drunk. People saw him walk out of Maloney's night-club, arm in arm with his manager, little Ike Green, who didn't

guess what this was all about. More people saw him having a row with Ike, because Ike wanted to get him to bed, and the Champ wanted to play. Who was this little twirp called Green, anyhow?

About eleven o'clock that night Speed got a telephone call from Ike:

"Fer Gawd's sake, come down here, will yuh, Mr. Donnersley? The Champ's soused, and we can't do nuttin' wid him."

Swell copy! Speed practically flew down.

When he got there, there wasn't any Champ. There was only a warm dead body, Ike Green, with his face so busted up you could hardly recognize him.

And they found the Champ sitting in a place where nice clean boys don't go, still cockeyed but getting a little sleepy now.

Murder. Just murder.

What a story that made!

What a story for Speed's first day as editor-in-chief of the New York *Blade*, Bubo Stearn's new tabloid newspaper!

CHAMP KILLS HIS MANAGER
QUINN BEATS IKE GREEN TO A PULP
AFTER DRUNKEN ORGY: FOUND IN
DIVE AFTER POLICE RAID

The worm will turn. Our milksop champion Jonathan (Milky) Quinn, tumbled fatally to the lure of the bright lights of Broadway, last night, and the result was grim tragedy. . . .

That was the story. He played it hard, and he played it big. He gave himself a by-line as the new editor-in-chief, just to show the boys he wasn't going to be any swivel-chair editor.

And that story, sifting through the mails, reached the little farm up Herkimer way where little Esther Brown Quinn was waiting for her baby to be born.

Her husband a murderer. Her good man found in a dive. Her sweet, blue-eyed boy!

And little Esther just died then. She wrote a note, and she died. She wrote a note which we cannot print here because of its tragedy, its terrible hungry pathos, its awful disillusion, its painful scream of a good woman's soul burning in a special hell.

"Oh, my Jonny," it began, *"I couldn't think you would be like that. I hadn't ought to of stayed away up here—"*

That note got to Jonathan Quinn in jail. They had a bad time with the poor boy then. It needed a strait-jacket and a padded cell before he was quiet again.

At the trial, Speed Donnersley was the star witness. Speed had found the body. Speed had got the phone-call. It made swell copy for the *Blade*, too. But it was just too bad for Milky Quinn.

"I never done it."

"Somebody musta framed me."

"Them newspapers is all crazy."

"I never seen them women before."

"Aint I gotta li'l' wife?"

Then he cracked. After that he cracked. He went simple. Went childish. Went coy and funny and queer. His big heart was gone. Even the judge at the trial could see he was wrong somewhere. The alienists studied him and declared he was not responsible. Nervous shock. They convicted him of manslaughter, not murder; and they sent him to a hospital instead of a prison.

And in the court the judge read a long speech about this being a terrible example of a fine country boy getting into the wrong profession. He quoted a lot of Speed Donnersley's columns. He pointed out the terrible lure behind the bright lights; he made a classical speech.

What about Speed?

He was no fool. Maybe Speed was a swell-head, but he was no fool. And when, sitting at the trial, he saw one of Bubo Stearn's iron men, sitting there grinning, with two busted hands wrapped up in gauze, he began to wonder.

And when, after the trial, Bubo said to him, "Well, kid, that just about fixes that so-and-so!" Speed could put two and two together.

But Speed kept his mouth shut. Bubo was a tough guy. You don't run off at the mouth about a guy like Bubo—not on any hunch. You just don't get hunches. You just act dumb and stay wise. Speed stayed wise.

ABOUT a month after that, Bubo's newspaper, the *Blade*, folded, which put Speed out of a job. Not that he cared. Not Speed. He had plenty of money. He went on a trip. It was a long trip around the world. It was a lot better to be away, he figured. You can keep your lip buttoned easier if you're away some place.

When Speed came back to New York a couple of years later, things weren't the same. He wasn't the same white-haired boy that could step into a job on any newspaper anywhere. No more.

There was a case of nerves called a "depression" going on, and jobs were scarce.

That was when Speed started his heavy drinking.

The best job he could get was on a little paper in Newark. He held that job a month, got drunk and lost it. He got a job on a paper upstate, and he got ditto and ditto. He went out West

where they still seemed to remember his name and his columns, and he did get jobs. But the more jobs he got, the more he lost; and the only fun he had came out of bottles. And not so much fun, either.

"Speed Donnersley—a helluva good newspaper man gone wrong."

The quotes are practically everybody's.

But Speed was no fool. He knew about himself. He didn't kid himself at all. There was a lot of man in Speed Donnersley. He knew what was the matter. He knew about his drinking. You can't kid yourself deep down inside. He could even get so he would stay sober for a long while—a month, six months, or even a year. But then he'd get drunk and stay drunk and lose his job. The editors knew him. Were sorry for him. They even tried to cover him up. But little by little they got fed up on Speed, and nobody could blame them.

haunting memory about not saying one word which might have taken a man's soul out of a hellish prison.

But he didn't, and he hadn't.

And so Speed drank. He drank to forget. He drank to get away from the picture in his mind of that pale, blank face of a young fellow gone out into a queer limbo. He drank to forget the lines of that pathetic letter written by "Li'l' Esther" before she died. He didn't want to drink, but he drank.

"Bubo," he said; "ya lousy—" You would not think a stumble-bum could move so fast. . . . All of a sudden— "Here's li'l' Esther!" he yelled, and his body shot forward.

What the editors didn't know was the thing which was going on in Speed's head all the time—a buzzing little memory about a champion pug, a little thing about not speaking up about those bandaged hands. A little thing about not talking to the D.A. about the crack Bubo Stearn had made. About being afraid. About taking a nice safe long boat-ride into far-away places. A little

Speed Donnersley sat up in his seat and yelled out to Mike:

"Gimme three more doubles, Mike. Make it fast."

Fat Mike shook his head. He knew. He had seen all this before. Well, it wasn't any of his business.

So he poured the whisky.

Back there with his head on a table was a poor old stumble-bum with a busted face, listening to voices that weren't there.

Speed drank his whisky, and in the vapor of it, in the sting of it, the new story was born.

"Jeez!" he said aloud to himself. "What a story!"

IT was, too. The old story, maybe; the sad old story, maybe; but with a new ending. The terrible, heart-cracking, shuddering story of a broken-down old pug they had all forgotten, down and out, and needing his jubilee.

Only this time it would be different.

Call it retribution. Call it restoration. Call it justification. Give it a name and make it good. Where was this Bubo Stearn now? Washed up and finished. Nobody ever heard of Bubo now. When Prohibition was finished, the big racketeers got shuffled around, and some faded out. Probably somebody had quietly plugged Bubo. Maybe they had put him in a box and poured in the cement. Maybe he was snug inside the cement of one of the piles in front of a Brooklyn pier. "A permanent strait-jacket," they call it. Anyhow, he wasn't there any more to bother Speed. He could write that story now—could write and make himself free.

He took another drink.

Free? Well, maybe not so free. Maybe it wasn't so good. What would they say? What would people say? How would they figure about a fellow who didn't come clean until ten years later? Somebody would ask why. Why? *Why?*

Better have another drink.

"Hey, Mike!"

But Fat Mike never heard him then. Fat Mike was hearing something else right then. He was listening to the quiet, low voice of a bird who had just come in the door, slouching over to bar with his hands in his pockets in a way which the newspaper men like to call "significantly." Significant it was. He slouched over, and there was another man behind him with something still more significant in his hand.

They call them "typewriters" in the vernacular.

Typewriters!

"Listen, punk," said the first one at the bar. "Keep nice an' quiet, see? Git away from that cash-register."

Mike got away.

"Line up, youse guys. Dis here is a stick-up. Make a funny play, any o' youse, an' I plays a tune on dis here typewriter, see?"

They "saw," and they lined up. Nearly a hundred men in Barney's place lining up against a wall. Nearly a hundred tough-mug chauffeurs and truck-pushers trembling in their shoes. Speed Donnersley, the toughest reporter in the business, lining up at his table, sticking his hands in the air, wishing he could reach that other drink. Staring at the first one's face. Staring and wondering what ten years will do to a face. There used to be a face like that. There was a deep crease across the man's right cheek. There was one eye that was lower than the other one. Funny eyes, too: snowbird eyes. Bubo Stearn used to have eyes like that.

"Okay! Shell out, you lousy punks!"

They shelled. The tough taxi-drivers shelled. The tough truck-pushers shelled. Fat Mike shelled too, and everybody knew how tough Mike was. The money rattled on the floor. Rolls of bills made a little thudding sound. The snout of the machine-gun was low, belly-low, and moving.

"Hell, I aint got no more, guys," one protested. "I'm bust, honest."

"Oh, yeah? Take him, Charley."

Charley took him. The snout of the Tommy-gun made a swift upward arc and crashed across the man's unprotected face, leaving it open and bloody, while the man slumped to the floor like a sack of cabbage. Fell and sprawled. Sprawled while Bubo's swift hand fumbled and found the wallet.

Then there was a sound in the back of the room.

It was the poor old stumble-bum, standing up and pushing his chair back.

"Jerk 'em up, youse."

The bum's head lifted quickly, but his hands stayed down.

"Hell, he's just a bum. He aint nobody." That was Fat Mike, in a low voice.

The bum stared.

"Jeez!" he said. "Bubo!"

SPEED DONNERSLEY saw it happen—he was the eyewitness. What a break for a newspaper man, eyewitness to a hold-up in a big joint like Barney's! Speed saw the bum stand up, straight and strong now, and not listening to those voices at all.

"Bubo," he said, and his voice was clear and ten years younger. "Bubo, ya lousy—"

You wouldn't think a stumble-bum could move so fast. It was like a cat skimming the ground to fight in an alley. It was like swift sudden death walking

on two strong legs—walking right into range of that typewriter, seeing and not caring.

"Charley!" called Bubo; just that one word.

Charley had to move a bit so that his boss would be out of line with his fire. Then he answered with the gun.

Chatter-chatter-chatter. The gun spoke the international language of death, but the bum's feet were still moving. The feet were moving, but the bum was gone; and a man was walking there. A *man.* A young-old man of maybe thirty-three, with seedy blond hair and a busted face.

Chatter-chatter-chatter. . . . Cat spits at cat. The gun spat low. The man staggered, but came on. Bubo, if that was his name, stepped back. There was a queer kind of terror in his eyes.

Chatter-chatter-chatter.

THE bum quivered first, and his eyes went milky white, but he came on again, and all of a sudden—

"Here's li'l' Esther!" he yelled, and his body shot forward. Speed Donnersley could feel the concussion of that wallop. Speed Donnersley, eyewitness, saw the face which had been, maybe, Bubo Stearn's, drop away like a mask, leaving a smear of blood and broken flesh. He saw the body of Bubo lifted into the air and whirled about, as if carried by invisible hands. Saw him crash into the machine-gunner. Saw them both fall together. Saw Bubo fall across the body of the man with the typewriter, his neck twisted queerly, the way it would stay until they threw a shovelful of dirt in his face. And he saw the thing which had been a bum fall on top of the other two, and the whole floor go red.

Then the cops.

The whistle sounded outside the door. The blue cops came barging in. There was a deluge of words and curses and sounds. There was the bark of a service automatic when the machine-gunner tried to get out from under Bubo's body.

Speed could move then.

"Hello, Eagan," he said to the first cop. "Jeez, did you see it happen?"

"Hello, Mr. Donnersley. Say, you gotta story there, hey?"

"Yeah," said Speed. "Sure, I got a story there all right. Sure, a big story, hey? Gotta get on the phone now."

BUT he stood still, watching them pick up the bodies, watching them fumbling in the blood—good red blood of a stumble-bum, mostly; when they tried to pick him up, he almost fell apart where the machine-gun had worked across his body.

"Jeez, Mr. Donnersley, I betcha you wouldn't know who this mug is—the one with a busted neck. Ever hear of Bubo Stearn? Usta be a big shot back awhile. Maybe you gotta big story there, Mr. Donohue."

"Yeah," said Speed. "Sure, a big story. I gotta get to a phone."

He staggered to the phone-booth. Each second on the way was longer than an hour. Each step was a stride back through the years. He could see banner headlines across the front page of the paper. He could see his own by-line, *"Francis X. (Speed) Donnersley, the Eagle's special reporter, eyewitness to the scene."* He could read the vibrant words in the banner: FORMER CHAMP VINDICATES NAME IN HEROIC DEATH. . . . He could see— He could see— He could see too much.

He dialed the number.

"Hello, Chief? This is Speed. No, listen; I'm okay. Hell, no, I'm sober. I'm on the wagon, Chief. Listen: I got a story. A big story, Chief. I was just over at Barney's, see, and there was a stick-up. Yeah, I was there. And whaddya know, the thug turns out to be old Bubo Stearn. Remember Bubo Stearn? Well, he's washed up now. There was a bum walked into him and smacked him cold. Busted his neck. Walked right into the Tommy-gun, Chief, and took it all in the belly, but knocked Bubo cold. Tear-jerker, huh? Big human-interest stuff, hey? Who was he? Hell, I wouldn't know. Just a bum. Just a stumble-bum with a busted face. Want I should come in an' tear off the yarn, Chief? . . . Okay."

Then he turned wearily to Fat Mike.

"Mike," he said, "gimme a whisky. Better gimme a whisky. I'm goin' on the wagon—tomorrow. Yeah, tomorrow."

Fulton Grant's stories are never commonplace. Remember "The Pirate's Beard" and "The Devil Came to Our Valley"? We plan to publish a novel of his in the near future, and one of his most exceptional and dramatic stories is scheduled for our next issue.

KIOGA of the

A tremendous adventure among the strange people of a newfound wilderness.

The Story Thus Far:

WE had been wrecked, Captain Scott and John La Salle and I, upon the rocky coast of that newfound land Nato'wa—a strange forest-clad region north of Siberia, warmed by volcanic fires and inhabited by the progenitors of the American Indian. We had come upon a desperate venture: the rescue of other castaways—the scientist James Munro, founder of the museum of which I was curator; Beth and Dan La Salle, daughter and son of the wealthy man who had financed Munro's expedition; and Lincoln Rand, better known as Kioga the Snow Hawk, who had grown to powerful manhood among the Indians of Nato'wa after his missionary parents had been killed. . . .

A marauding crew of gold-hunters, we knew, had made a safe landing ahead of us; the better to guard against them and the probably hostile Shoni Indians, it was decided Scott and La Salle should remain in our camp while I set out alone in a crude canoe in search of our friends. And I had found one of them, Kioga the Snow Hawk—or rather he had found me, just in time to save me from a great tiger—and from the arrows of the Shoni. . . .

(The story continues in detail:)

"I KILLED last night at dusk," Kioga told me. "There should be plenty left. Wait here until I return."

Thirty feet—perhaps much more—below, a branch thrust out. Stonelike, Kioga dropped down through the intervening space, broke his fall by seizing its springy end, and forcing it to a lower branch, let go. The limb sprang back. The man was gone, as soundless as an owl that drifted past on velvet wings.

And on that lofty perch I lay, a man of civilization, wondering at the fortunes of the recent past, grateful to my very depths for the sweet boon of life, so near extinction a few short hours ago.

An hour passed. Wind in the pungent evergreens; notes of wild birds fluting clearly through the branches; the bugle-calls of elk far on some distant ridge; an eagle soaring by, a fawn in its talons, bleating—these were the sounds; with now and then from far below this waving green, as from the ocean's depths, a heavy sinister note, a tiger challenging.

A shadow fell across the ledge. Turning with a start, I saw the Snow Hawk standing there.

"This much was left," he grinned, "because it smelled of the smoke from the fire I cooked it with."

Copyright, 1938, by McCall Corporation (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.

Unknown Land

By WILLIAM CHESTER

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

He flung a leg of roasted venison on a flat of rock, and cut thick helpings from it, placing these on slabs of birch-bark taken from a bundle, made of new raw deer-skin, the hair inside. From this also he took wild sour plums, sweet acorns, pungent cress, still wet with water from the brook it grew in. None knew better how to live in the forest. Never did a meal go down more easily.

AND when the wilderness repast was done, we knew one another better; and the Snow Hawk looked forward to a meeting with Scott, La Salle, and my party at the blockhouse. That planned, we slept, and on the morrow started out, Kioga bearing me earthward as easily as some creature to the branches born.

Striving then to walk, a single step convinced me of its inadvisability. Kioga, glimpsing these poor efforts, called an instant halt, amid a thicket of forest close beside the river.

"There is a better way, in which you'll not need your legs," he said. "The Shoni shall donate a good canoe. They do not know it, but they shall."

From the tunnel emerged majestically a double row of stately brutes, hauling mightily.

Another hour passed while he was gone. When he returned, it was by water, in a long canoe, a dugout larger than my own. I climbed aboard with difficulty, took up a paddle and bent to labor with the Snow Hawk, our course upriver.

"Rocks right ahead," I warned Kioga, who smiled, I knew not why. But following his gaze, I saw two long and narrow wolfish muzzles appearing in the undergrowth near by.

Wolves they were, but fiercer, more ravenous than any known to hunters of my other world. With long stiletto fangs gleaming white, they slowly emerged with back-laid ears—tall as Irish deerhounds, yet true wolves in all but their exceptional size. Lean, gaunt, wicked-eyed, they moved as one toward the rocks in the river, as if to cross by leaping from one to another.

Then suddenly the rocks rose in amazing bounds, revealed as a herd of river-bison, until now unaware of stalking peril in the thickets. With awkward haste they fled, bounding all about us and dashing water into our craft. But already the killers had seized and hamstrung a fat young cow.

A hundred times since then I have seen the wolves of Nato'wa kill. But each time is like the first. One does not harden to such stark ferocious cruelty.

NOW the wonder was begun. That which earlier was unseen thrust itself upon the eye. Here what had seemed a bayou darkened by driftwood was in fact black with thousands of wild geese. Elsewhere along the river-banks animals rose up to give us way, or calmly watched our passage. At every turn we glimpsed a moose or two, and caribou in bands lingered on the sandbars. The veldt of Africa, the grim Dekkan of India, hold no such plenitude of birds and beasts as may be seen each day in dark Nato'wa, most populous of wildernesses.

Pausing at a point some way northward, Kioga glanced quickly up and down the river, then raised a net of leafy vines and drew the craft beneath its screen. A cave-mouth gaped darkly just behind, into which the canoe moved, obedient to Kioga's pressure of the blade.

There came a rasping sound, the smell of smoke, a spot of red glowing in the darkness, then suddenly a spurt of flame, and in one hand Kioga held a light, the product of his friction bow.

The cave was deep, with several chambers. The Snow Hawk disappeared, returning with a great armload of weapons. Some were rifles, rough but cunningly put together and fitted with flint-locks and firing-pans. Others still were pistol-length, and all were of a shape and size recalling weapons surviving from the War of Independence.

RETURNING from another trip, Kioga deposited leather bags of shot and horns of black gunpowder. "We stripped the fort of everything," he said. "Flashpan carved the stocks and bored the barrels. Munro made the powder of raw materials from the forest deposits from mineral springs."

I chose a pistol and a rifle for myself, slung horn of powder round my neck, and fastened bullet-pouch at belt. The remaining weapons filled the craft between us. On top of them Kioga tossed two heavy leather bags. Thus laden, we set off again.

When the rough angles of the blockhouse appeared, a hail told us that we were viewed. The place gave forth its occupants, among them John La Salle and Captain Scott. Their glances were riveted upon Kioga, with curiosity, admiration and wonder intermingling.

Acknowledgments followed introductions. The quiet Snow Hawk made a good impression. La Salle stood forth to grip Kioga's hand and to ask:

"My daughter, Beth—and Dan?"

"She is safe and well," Kioga answered. "Dan has not returned from a hunting-trip, but—he should be able to take care of himself."

La Salle went pale at that news, then pulled himself together. "Thank God, Beth is safe!" he managed fervently. "When shall we see her?"

"As soon as I can tell her you are here."

His fears allayed, La Salle now eyed the splendid form before him. Of all that stood there, perhaps only Kioga and myself knew what was in his mind. Kioga bore his scrutiny and appraisal with a level gaze that did not waver. Then once again La Salle put forth his hand. The gesture marked his acceptance of the other, both as a man, and as the man his daughter loved.

Kioga then distributed the arms from the canoe among Scott's men—one rifle, shot and powder to a man, and from the leather bags brought buckskin shirts and caps of fur, and smoke-tanned moc-

casins to replace the tattered relics of our seamen's clothing. When the change was made, a band of men stood there who henceforth were to be frontiersmen of Nato'wa, modern only in their memories of civilization, for all apparel and equipment seemed of some bygone day.

The Snow Hawk left not long thereafter, and all that night I heard La Salle moving restlessly about the blockhouse. In the morning his voice called the glad news: "Turn out! They're coming!"

His words were hardly necessary. Each man was on his feet and looking through the morning mists at an argosy both strange and picturesque, approaching.

It came in close formation, a swift and compact unit, prepared at once for war or peace, four long canoes, all deep with the weight of many men, Kioga in the lead. I heard a hearty hail—a voice not heard in long and anxious years. "How are you, Kirk?" James Munro cried, by way of greeting.

And then from behind him we heard one astonished word, *"Dad!"* And a beautiful young white woman—Beth La Salle—waved frantically, unable to speak further.

La Salle rushed forth, thigh-deep into the river, and clasped her in his arms.

Elsewhere in those canoes, quick sharp eyes gazed from face to face among us, then darted to the blockhouse on the bank. Eyes in the heads of bare-torsoed, red-skinned men—known for Indians at a glance, red men of Nato'wa, beholding with intensest curiosity these strange white-skinned newcomers.

In one canoe, behind Kioga, a curious figure sat, an old black hat crushed shapeless on his head. More homely face was never seen: crooked, hooked nose, mismated eyes, long, sadly drooping mustaches, a neck so lean and skinny that the head sat on it like an apple on a crooked stick—Flashpan, the lost *Narwhal's* ex-cook, and the tireless miner after gold.

Upon his shoulder perched a long-tailed thick-haired monkey. Before him crouched a malemute, as shaggy as a wolf. Just behind him sat a black-eyed swarthy lad, naked as the Indians, not over twelve years old, taking the newcomers in with quick observant eyes —Tokala, runaway from a civilized Indian reservation.

And in the next canoe sat James Munro, the scientist-explorer. In deerskin shirt fringed on the sleeves, bare-headed, he seemed not to have aged a day.

Thirty feet below—perhaps more—a branch thrust out. Stonelike, Kioga dropped through the intervening space.

The canoe in which he sat had not touched bank when out he sprang to seize my hand and clap me on the back. "Stan Kirk! God only knows how you came here, but you're a welcome sight. I know now how *Crusoe* must have felt when he saw men from home."

SEEN thus at closer range, Munro had a noticeable limp. "A Shoni spear can give a nasty wound," he explained. "It happened when they stormed our fort. But that's enough of me. How are things home at the Museum?"

"All well," I told him. "But what is this about the People of the Tusk?"

"You must have discovered my notes," he answered with eyes that kindled suddenly. And now the man had subtly changed. He was the scholar, standing on the threshold of some fresh discovery. "I have a carved tusk, which tells a baffling history. Strange people, somewhere north of here. A mighty culture, oldest on the earth. A racial drama now unfolding stranger than any you have ever read or written of. But more about that later."

Meanwhile, Cap'n Scott and his crew met these men of the wilderness and were getting acquainted by the light of crackling aromatic hardwood, above which fresh-caught fish were sizzling.

Tokala, the lithe and handsome boy, acknowledged introductions with a grave reserve, for he was Indian. Now and then a ripple of purest Shoni glided from his tongue as he spoke to a dusky-skinned girl, fair of face and form, Heladi, the beloved of Dan La Salle. A knife was at Tokala's belt. Nato'wa and its ancient ways had claimed him.

"How well you look," said La Salle, surveying Beth with enthusiasm. "I'd never think you'd known any hardship."

"'Tis love, sir," ventured Flashpan banteringly, with a knowing smile. "Love makes her look like that. 'Affection lights a brighter flame than ever blazed by art.'"

"And who may you be?" asked forthright Scott, taking notice of the little miner for the first time.

Flashpan struck another pose. "Aloysius Butterberry, citizen of the world—known to his friends as Flashpan," was the quick reply. "First to sink a pick fer gold in new Nato'wy. Miner, master barber, gunsmith, locksmith, blacksmith, cook on twenty ships in seven seas, an' hero o' the siege o' Teskatuna. Now does that answer, sir, or do ye wish me to enumerate my many other qualities?" And with the question Flashpan regarded him with open guileless gaze. "It's glad I am to meet white men of yore good nature, Cap'n Scott, and gladder still to welcome all of ye into our midst."

Scott put forth his hand in instant cordiality, a grin upon his face.

But now Beth's father's voice was heard, a trace of his anxiety sounding in it. "I had supposed my son Dan would be with you. No doubt he is to follow?"

There was a sudden silence, broken by the Snow Hawk's quiet voice: "I'm going out to meet him."

La Salle's face lengthened as his eyes met Kioga's. "To meet him—or to search for him?" was his question.

Kioga, seeing that evasion must only multiply La Salle's anxiety, gave him the facts. "You're not to worry," he concluded. "There are a dozen things which could have delayed him. I'll find him—depend on me."

"I shall not find that difficult to do," La Salle responded. "Good luck."

OUTSIDE the blockhouse it was a brilliant night. The Indians, intolerant of walls and roof, had built an outside fire, and they made room for us about it. And while Kioga gave his instructions to the warriors, we watched the strange firelit scene—or turned away to behold the long fingers of the ghostly aurora flickering across the dark sky.

A bed of brown-red embers formed, the while Kioga still talked with his warriors. Then, so quietly that some of us did not know he had gone, Kioga took his leave, to search for Dan La Salle.

Small blue tongues licked up and down the resinous remnants of the firelogs. No one broke the brooding stillness of the midnight hour. The howl of far-off wolves came muted from the distance. As if touched off by that, there came the sound of taut bowstrings vibrating. A warrior began the prayer-chant of his tribe. The Shoni-voices rose in easy harmony—an ancient chant composed before their first ancestors wandered from Nato'wa, to settle in America and become the tribes found by the earliest white men.

It was this sound—a prayer-chant rising on behalf of his success—which followed Kioga out into the mazes of the gloomy forest. . . .

About the breakfast fire on the following morning James Munro revealed to us the import of Kioga's final talk

with the Indians and himself the night before:

A month ago, content no longer with their bark canoes, which provided small security against weather and possible attack by savage men, the Snow Hawk's band had set to work. Equipped with tools, all earlier hammered from crude metal on Flashpan's forge in Fort Teskatuna, they had begun construction of a stancher river-boat more suited to their needs.

Upriver logs had been felled. With ax and iron wedges the men had hewn and split, trimming the resultant planks with cunning hands. Of good hard wood a keel had been shaped. Where holes were needed, they had been burned through with heated irons. A rudder and tiller had been cut but not assembled. A stout sapling formed a mast; and from deerskin, cut and sewn together, a sail had taken shape. All the joints were calked with pine-pitch. In this state of near-completion the vessel now lay hidden in a cove near by. Today we were to fetch her from that hiding-place and tow her near the blockhouse where the final work could be done to make her fit for use.

This was achieved without delay, and many hands made swift work of what remained yet to be done upon the vessel. Our labors were a partial antidote for the depression caused by the absence of Kioga and Dan. As we worked, guns in the blockhouse covered our movements, against the possibility of Indian attack.

At last the hardwood deck was calked, the mast firm-seated, the rudder hung astern, the bilge bailed out. A generous supply of powder and ball were stored forward; rifles and pistols were placed in convenient racks, and one of the fort's small guns bolted to the foredeck beam. Stout oars were included.

A strange craft indeed, lacking paint and much else that goes into the manufacture of a modern vessel, but she was stout and formidable withal. We splashed her peak with river-water, and called her *Amazon*—a name which time and events would more than justify.

CHAPTER V

KNOWING the impulsive and adventurous nature of Dan La Salle, and realizing all too well the nature of the human foes who haunted this part of the Shoni forest, the Snow Hawk found slight difficulty picking up Dan's trail and reading into it, by natural inference, a fair approximation of what had happened.

He could imagine young La Salle, who had until that hour been so active in the company of Kioga and the forest men, chafing at the inaction of a hidden camp in the forest, the while all waited for Kioga to return with badly needed arms. He could imagine the young white man looking to his own crude rifle and checking the single-shot pistol thrust through his belt, to find it in good working order. Their food was none too plentiful—of that Dan would have thought as well.

NO doubt, as at this moment while Kioga circled round that abandoned camping-place, a fox had barked softly in a thicket. Owls had chuckled in the trees near by. From somewhere near Dan had caught the sleepy gobble of a wild turkey from its roost and raised his rifle, hopeful of an opportunity to kill it. The call had been repeated; it seemed a little farther off. The bird had remained invisible.

Again Dan heard the bird and stealthily moved out among the sable shadows of the trees, then waited silently. The guttural call came, just ahead. Dan stalked it, putting into service all the woodland lore he recently had learned. The sound receded; it must be roosting farther away than he had thought. He moved forward once more.

Minutes passed. Dan moved again, on moccasins that made no sound, his only light that from the moon, oft hidden by deep banks of clouds. The voice was still—perhaps the bird had detected him.

Dan moved to one side, amid the thickets, circled widely, ears attentive to catch the slightest sound; then slowly, on a level with his eyes, a human head appeared among the lower foliage.

Down either cheek a wavy ochre line was painted. Two bars of white were daubed upon the forehead. A feather painted red for wounds and trimmed for bravery, fell across one shoulder from a twist of raven braid, identifying a Shoni brave. The eyes, black as the shadows in the forest, were fixed upon him, cold and glittering.

Dan jerked his rifle to his shoulder. With his movement came a sound behind him. Before his finger hooked the trigger Dan quivered from a heavy blow, rocked dazed upon his feet, then fell.

Two pairs of eyes that gleamed with satisfaction met across his prone body.

Rawhide thongs fell round his wrists and were jerked up cruelly tight. Silently the Indians picked him up and hurried toward the river near by. . . . Such was the tale the trail unfolded to the eyes of one trained to translate the signs which ended at the river-bank. Among the reeds a small canoe had lain, and into it Dan had been put.

TO determine which direction the canoe had taken when it left the bank, Kioga drew upon his knowledge of the river and the habits of the Shoni natives. Since Dan's direction had been consistently upstream from the white men's camp, to have gone down the river would have left them open to discovery from the bank. With deep respect for the sharp marksmanship of the white men, they would not have chanced this risk.

Upriver, then, Kioga hastened, running on the narrow beaten animal trails which twisted everywhere along the river's course. Parting the thickets at a point some miles above the blockhouse, Kioga waited, reasonably certain that his speed had exceeded that possible to a small canoe moving against the currents. And presently, moving toward a midstream island, he glimpsed a light canoe, two warriors at the paddles, with another person propped against the thwart. The one propped up was Dan.

Wanting a canoe, Kioga thought to take instantly to the currents. But to swim across directly would make him stand out to watchful eyes as the single object moving against the stream. Instead he turned upstream a little way, swam strongly out into mid-river, then let the eddies bear him down upon the island bank.

Amid the reedy thicket that rimmed the shore he writhed along to gain deeper cover, then quickly found the Indian camp, pitched near the island bank. The warriors were Shoni; markings on their cheeks and brows attested that at once. Numbering two score and more, they quite surrounded the young white captive, now conscious in their midst. Dan maintained an air of scorn, a fact which Kioga noted with approval, for any sign of fear would have doomed him to the ingenious tortures which so amused the Shoni.

Kioga's mind fixed on means of achieving the white man's rescue. An attempt made at this time of day could only end in failure, give warning to the enemy, with likely injury to Dan at the first alarm. On the other hand, to wait for nightfall might be to see the warriors depart before that time. A better idea sprang into mind. And Kioga melted away as he had come, slipped silently into the water again, and let it bear him down toward the blockhouse.

Tense with suspense, the little garrison received him anxiously. In quick sentences, economical of words, he told what he had seen, making no further attempt to minimize the danger, and quickly sketched his plan of action thus:

"Bring out the *Amazon*. We'll come upon them unexpectedly, and with a show of force and strength. Sometimes that is effective with the Shoni. But speed will count. Move quickly!"

Munro told off six men, myself among them. The *Amazon* moved from her berth near by and out upon the river. And aided by just enough wind to fill her sail, the crude craft moved grimly upstream, toward where the Indians had bivouacked.

"We'll throw a scare into 'em," threatened Flashpan, looking to the falconet up on the forward deck. "They aint a Injun livin' who can stand ag'in' what I got here."

NEARING the island, we who accompanied Kioga had our first view of the Indian camp. Upon a sandy spit a dozen good canoes were drawn up in a line. On shore the ever-present abattis of spearlike branches stood raised against the forest prowlers.

Around the fires half a hundred naked red men squatted, plumes waving, pipes sending up their incense to form a picturesque group as from a painted scene of long ago.

Then suddenly a warrior pointed. As one man the hostiles leaped afoot, to gaze in wonderment at the awesome craft bearing slowly in upon them, sunlight glowing redly upon her sail.

But Flashpan left them not long in wonderment. Leaping to the bow, he shook a hairy fist and sent a shout across the intervening space: "Whoopee, redskins! Ye asked fer trouble, and here we be."

Too late Kioga sought to restrain the little miner's enthusiasm. The Indians, realizing the identity of their unexpected visitors, sent back sharp greetings in return. The twanging of many bows foretold the deadly skitter of arrows across the waters, while several thudded viciously into our planking.

Raising his head above the forward bulwark, Kioga warned the natives gathered on the bank: "Put down your arms, warriors, and give up the white captive—or we destroy you!"

The savages sent forth a wild defiant yell, followed by another storm of arrows. Kioga turned to Flashpan with a nod, and the old miner turned to his falconet. While Munro held the tiller steady, the mustached gunner blew hard upon his smoking match and lit the priming powder. Came then a flash, a belch of flame and acrid smoke, then rolling thunder.

A pair of iron balls, held together by links of chain, flew spinning furiously toward the shore. With a rending and tearing of bark and framework, the row of canoes on the spit flew into fragments. Not one by one, but all at once, as if a bomb had struck them! No single craft escaped the missile which, crashing through the flimsy craft, ended its career by smashing down half of the abattis and splintering a rock behind the Indians with a startling shower of fire.

The *Amazon* had spoken. While the echoes of her voice recoiled from cliff to cliff, the Indians stood frozen to the earth, beholding the settling ruins of their many craft. Then as with a single mind they wheeled and scattered into the depths of the island's jungle.

Of Dan we had as yet seen no trace; but wading swiftly ashore and giving chase to one of the fleeing warriors, Kioga overtook, disarmed and pulled him violently down, throttling him.

"Where is the white man?" demanded the Snow Hawk, releasing his grip that the other might answer.

"Where you will never find him," was the sullen answer.

Kioga increased the pressure on the other's throat, but then relaxed. Not even death can part the lips of a Shoni brave who does not wish to speak. There was a better way. Kioga drew his knife. The savage watched like a cornered wolf.

"Come, now, *eki*," he said. "Where have they gone? Speak quickly, or I will crop you short-haired like a white man, and when you go back home all the women will make a mock of you."

Stubbornly the savage kept his silence. Kioga seized one of the glistening braids, proudest possession of the native warrior, and put the edge of his knife against it. The warrior writhed, but could not break that iron strength which held him down.

"Who will know you spoke?" the Snow Hawk said persuasively. "I do not wish to make you a laughingstock for all the tribe. Quick—where is the white man?"

Eyes upon the knife, the savage yielded sullenly. "Twelve warriors took him earlier upriver."

"What will they do with him?"

"By torture they will make him tell where the white man have concealed the black dust and the sticks which kill."

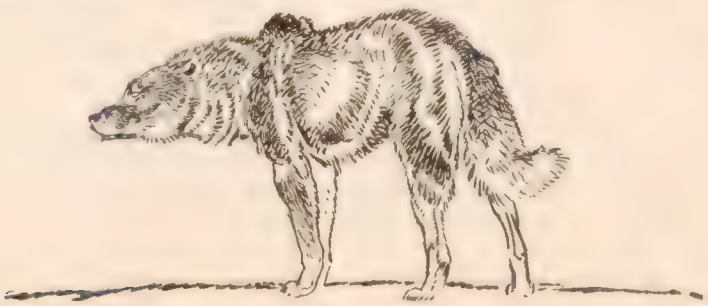
KIOGA knew he meant firearms and powder, with which Munro's party had held mastery over their Indian foes. "They waste their time," he told the savage, permitting him to rise. "We have moved all elsewhere. But you have told me what I wished to know. Go, then—and think well of the Snow Hawk."

The other started. "I am of the Wacipi, who dwell far in the mountains. *Ai*, I know you now! Why do you linger with the whites, when all our tribes are at each other's throats? It was not so when you ruled us as chief-of-war. Why do you not come back and reunite the tribes?"

"Blood speaks to blood," Kioga answered. "Long though I dwelt among the Shoni, the whites are still my kind. I must remain with them."

"Come back," the other pleaded. "A thousand Shoni maidens all slim and lovely as the moon, would welcome you."

"There is a white-skinned woman I have chosen," the Snow Hawk answered. "It can not be, warrior,"



"Then luck to you," the other said regretfully. Kioga watched him disappear, knowing that but for Beth La Salle, he would have chosen the exciting life of a Shoni savage, to any other on earth. . . .

The Snow Hawk returned to the *Amazon* with news of what the Shoni warrior had told him. "They have the start of us by several hours. To go back for our own canoes would take much time. But with the oars and half a breeze, it may be we can overtake them."

"Let's git a-goin', then," said Flashpan, breaking out the oars. Thus pursuit began, the clumsy *Amazon* against the Shoni greyhounds of the river. A stronger wind blew up behind us. What with that and our strenuous efforts at the oars, the crude craft forged onward—when suddenly with a jar, she heeled, and lost all way, brought up upon a bar.

Clearly only war-canoe could overtake war-canoe, particularly in shallow upriver waters. Reluctantly Flashpan put the tiller over. By dint of mighty efforts on the part of all, the little vessel was refloated, and under oars moved once again into her berth beside the blockhouse.

In haste we made the change from *Amazon* to Shoni long-boat, and set forth eagerly afresh, recruiting several of Kioga's red-skinned allies as extra paddlers. Few craft are swifter than the Shoni war-canoes. Pressed onward by its brawny paddlers, the racing long-boat left a bubbling wake behind, and keen eyes watched ahead for traces of the craft which bore the captive Dan.

ARRIVING at the junction of two rivers, there was no way of knowing which route the enemy, still unseen ahead, had taken. While those aboard the pursuing craft debated, from a point somewhere near by there came a short owl's hoot, followed by the *yap-yap* of a fox—the signal used between Kioga and his Shoni friends.

The Snow Hawk cocked an attentive ear, raised a hand for silence, and dipped quietly, turning the canoe toward the bank. On the instant Flashpan, Munro and the others leveled ready rifles.

Kioga laid his paddle down without a word, and in its stead took up a war-bow. Once more the signal-cry now came, and on the shore a movement in the thicket drew the black stares of our rifles. For of the band to whom that special signal had been made known, all were here present in the war-canoe.

"Who is it? Speak!" Kioga challenged in the Shoni.

There was no audible reply. But as all watched the thicket, suddenly a slim figure stood boldly forth. The tension eased. "Tokala!" came Flashpan's voice. "What'n tarnation be ye doin' in the woods alone?"

Tokala's eyes were on Kioga while he answered, in a swift flow of liquid Shoni. "They do not want Tokala in the camp of Captain Scott. I am too small, they think, to do a grown man's work—I who served the guns of Teskatuna!"

KIOGA'S face remained impassive. "What do you here?"

"I bring you word of Dan."

"Speak quickly, then."

"He passed here not an hour ago. Twelve warriors guard him."

"Where did they go?"

"I heard them speak of the Empty Lodges."

Kioga's face expressed a sudden understanding. "Abandoned caves up near the Tamasili—the Mountains-that-have-no-tops," he said to James Munro in explanation. "I know them well. I often hid there when a boy. What lies beyond those northern mountains no one knows. Their peaks are always in the clouds."

Tokala watched the Snow Hawk sharply, although he took no step toward the canoe. For all that he was preoccupied with gravest fears for Dan, the Snow Hawk still found time to read Tokala's thoughts. The boy had sought, successfully, to make amends for certain small mischiefs of which he had been guilty of late. Kioga said no word, but moved a little back and made a gesture.

Needful of no further urging, Tokala sprang eagerly into the craft, admitted to a place of honor in the band. The long canoe moved on again, its goal the Empty Lodges.

To reach this goal we now must face the swift white waters of the river's upper reaches, and by main strength prevail against the ripping currents lashing at our craft. From far astern I saw the bare backs of the paddlers gleaming bright with sweat, and in the bow the splendid torso of Kioga, like some perfect sculpture by Cellini come to life. . . .

Cunningly the Snow Hawk took advantage of each factor in our favor in that long-drawn contest with the boiling waters. Now angling across the stiff unyielding breakers of a mill-race; now

changing cautiously from one channel to another; now paddling furiously, now thrusting deep their river-spears in poling on their craft; and again riding easily against the direction of the stream by hugging shore to gain help from the counter-currents; so by water-wisdom, strength and dogged persistence we left the danger well behind and came at last in sound and sight of Tamasili—the so-called topless mountains, in which a thousand streams both large and small take their rise as cataracts which ultimately swell the mighty rivers of south-easterly Nato'wa.

Amid the swirling mists of waterfall which thundered to our right we put the craft against a lesser fall which veiled an overhanging cliff. An instant there the war-canoe rebelled, as if her every instinct were opposed to passage through that seemingly solid wall of liquid.

Then with the combined goad of all our poles she surged ahead. The thick fine spray enveloped her; a sudden torrent all but swamped her under. Another mighty effort from each man, and she was through the water-wall, the whirlpools of the falls behind. In the cavern-lake deep under and behind the fall, an utter stillness rose about the craft as she moved ahead. Far astern already, the light shone through the fall as through a stained-glass window. But forward was velvet darkness, and a deep oppressive stillness.

Suddenly a spark appeared ahead, and then upon the gleaming walls the reddish flicker of a fire. Close above the rocky roof hung low, and far ahead the hidden lake stretched out its dark and silent surface. Upon a ledge above the water-level we now could see the forms of men.

Without a sound Kioga drew the craft against the wall of this deep under-mountain cavern; and bidding us await him there, was suddenly no longer with us, but on a hidden path known only to himself, and moving like a stalking panther toward that distant fire.

IN his persecuted boyhood, oft the Snow Hawk had hidden and wandered through this honeycomb of ancient chambers, occupied in olden times by some long-forgotten race of cliff-men. Now calling on his memory of its winding paths, he found a way which brought him presently within the sound of human voices. He turned his head to listen, caught the gutturals of a Shoni dialect, and then the clear voice of Dan La Salle.

The words held grim significance. "I wouldn't tell you if I knew. Go on, you copperhead, pull out the nail!"

The Shoni, then were seeking to wring from Dan by torture the secret of the arms and powder-cache! There fell a silence during which Kioga crept in view of the dreadful proceedings. Dan was by the rock wall, his tight-thonged hands bleeding. Before him in a semi-circle sat his red tormentors; and as Kioga watched, one of the warriors held a flaming stick against Dan's arm, already seared from previous torture.

OBSERVING Dan with practised eye, Kioga saw him near collapse. The Snow Hawk looked about for the sentry, and saw him standing a little apart from the others, but like them, intent on the torture. Upon the sentry Kioga glued his eyes, inching forward flat against the wall. Dan screamed in sudden agony. Derisive laughter from the warriors echoed. Anticipating it, Kioga struck with suddenness, a deadly, short hammer blow upon the sentry's temple.

The man sagged flat against the wall, the laughter of the warriors covering the sound of fist on bone. Ere he could fall, Kioga drew him out of view, and in a flash possessed his blanket. Draped therein and muffled to the eyes, he moved into the firelight, complaining gutturally of the chill.

The torturers took no notice as he bent above the mooring-rope of their own canoe, cast it free and watched it drift well beyond reach. They did not see the lightning glance which played upon Dan's face, nor the lowering of the wrap by which Kioga revealed himself to the captive for one short instant.

But none could overlook the vehemence of the sentry who suddenly advanced upon the captive, brandishing a knife before his face.

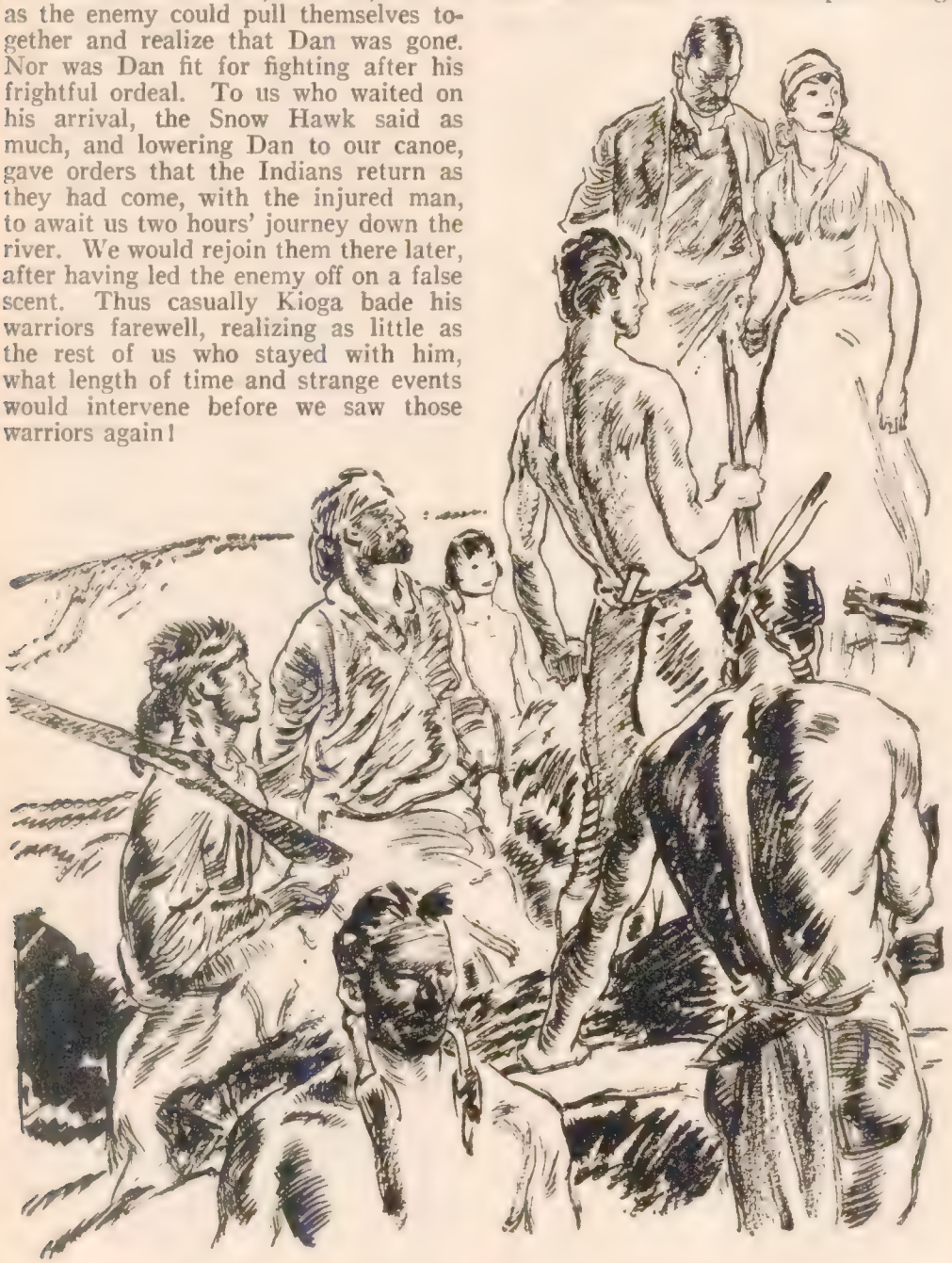
"Stand back, Ogoya," said a tall warrior, laying hand upon Kioga's blanketed shoulder heavily. The supposed sentry flung it off, as if in anger, and answered gruffly: "Why do you play with him? Thus, with my knife—and thus—I'll mark him for a coward."

The bonds about Dan's wrists, cut through, were loosening. Aware of rescue, Dan feigned fresh agony. Kioga, whirling of a sudden, obliterated both light and fire with the blanket.

Plunged into darkness, the startled Shoni had not risen to their feet before

the Snow Hawk swept all the embers from the stone into the water. Then bearing Dan in arms, he softly backed away, leaving the Shoni to hurl themselves upon each other.

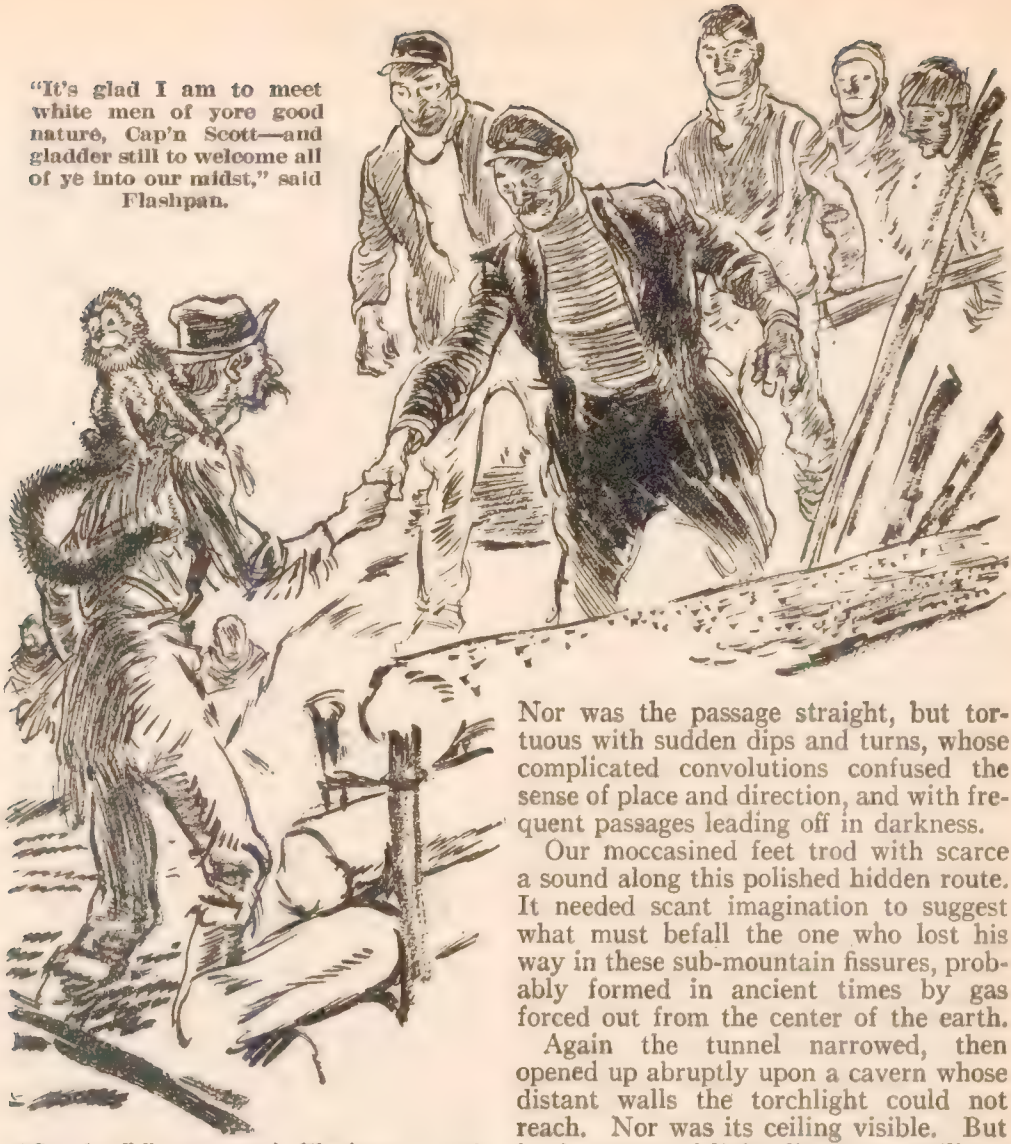
Pursuit would follow, he knew, as soon as the enemy could pull themselves together and realize that Dan was gone. Nor was Dan fit for fighting after his frightful ordeal. To us who waited on his arrival, the Snow Hawk said as much, and lowering Dan to our canoe, gave orders that the Indians return as they had come, with the injured man, to await us two hours' journey down the river. We would rejoin them there later, after having led the enemy off on a false scent. Thus casually Kioga bade his warriors farewell, realizing as little as the rest of us who stayed with him, what length of time and strange events would intervene before we saw those warriors again!



The first hubbub amid the Shoni warriors had died, At any moment now we might expect pursuit. Kioga led the way by what sixth sense I do not know, for none of us could see an inch before our noses. We followed like blind men, guided only by a hold upon the Snow Hawk's leather rope, which stretched from man to man and formed a kind of guide and safety-line.

At last Kioga called a halt. We heard the rasp of fire-sticks, smelled smoke and saw flame. We stood upon a ledge two feet above the water level. Lighted by Kioga's torch, taken from the remains of an old fire, we saw a wall in which were niches cut into the rock.

"The entrance to the Empty Lodges," Kioga said. "The Shoni think the place is haunted by the spirits of the dead."



"It's glad I am to meet white men of yore good nature, Cap'n Scott—and gladder still to welcome all of ye into our midst," said Flashpan.

"So do I," muttered Flashpan; and though he spoke half jestingly, the stillness of the place had gripped the miner as it had the others, now climbing up the niches on Kioga's heels. A rough-hewn stair was also climbed. We gathered on a sloping platform just above. It seemed we could progress no farther.

But while Munro held up the torch, Kioga leaped catlike upward, seized a hand-grip, and vanished overhead. An instant later the coil of his rope snaked downward. Hollowly, as in a well, his voice now came, bidding the others take hold and so be drawn aloft.

Upon a second platform there was ample room for all, and off its inner edge a cavelike hole led toward the bowels of the mountain. Kioga led the way with torch ablaze. The others followed through a tunnel which now was large and spacious, and again almost too narrow for a man to squeeze through. Nor was the passage straight, but tortuous with sudden dips and turns, whose complicated convolutions confused the sense of place and direction, and with frequent passages leading off in darkness.

Our moccasined feet trod with scarce a sound along this polished hidden route. It needed scant imagination to suggest what must befall the one who lost his way in these sub-mountain fissures, probably formed in ancient times by gas forced out from the center of the earth.

Again the tunnel narrowed, then opened up abruptly upon a cavern whose distant walls the torchlight could not reach. Nor was its ceiling visible. But in the range of light dim traces still remained to indicate its use by other men, for under foot were bits of charcoal and half-burned wood, of which Kioga presently had built a fire.

"Dan and our warriors are safe," he said. "The Shoni will never follow us hither, but we had better wait a few hours here to give them time to quit the caverns. Munro, at least, will find it interesting."

The scientist looked up. "What's in your mind?"

"Back farther in the caves are chambers which once were used by other men. I don't know who they were. Unlike the Shoni, whom you call Indians, these were blue-eyed men, although I think their skins were coppery."

Munro took that up instantly. "How do you know their eyes were blue?"

"Drawings on the wall portray it unmistakably."

"Never heerd of blue-eyed Injins," offered Flashpan.

"Among the Mandans of America white men found them," Munro answered. "Some lay it to contact with Scandinavians. Others call it some queer form of albinism and so dispose of a racial riddle without really solving it. These drawings may throw new light on the Mandans. Let's look them over."

Kioga led the way. We climbed a narrow path which ascended one side of the vaulted chamber, proceeded along a twisting byway, to pause before a flat smooth wall. In colors well-preserved and striking to the eye, some primitive artist had drawn strange pictures on the rock.

A moment Dr. Munro eyed them, with a deep absorption, then turned to me, subdued excitement flashing from his eyes.

"Another link," he said, then realizing that his words were meaningless to me, withdrew a fold of snowy birch-bark from an inner pocket of his hunting-shirt. Used in lieu of paper, one side of this record was covered with peculiar hieroglyphs. "You remember my note about the People of the Tusk?"

I nodded, well recalling too the tusk itself, which Munro had among his effects back at the blockhouse—the largest tusk I had ever seen, not excepting any which are displayed in Africa or India.

"This is my copy of the carvings on it," Munro went on. "Notice those drawings on the wall—how similar they are. It may be that among them I can find the meaning of these hieroglyphs."

MUNRO began his study with the absorption of the scientist at work, and in a little while grew jubilant.

"For months," he said, spreading his notes before us, "I sought some key by which to read those signs. The ones which oftenest recur are what I call the symbols of the dove and the horn, which look like this." Munro then scratched these rough figures on the stone:

"The other signs, in order of their frequency, are thirteen in number and look like this." Then to the first Munro added these remaining picture-signs:

"Therefore, here is a writing consisting of fifteen signs, not representing letters, but syllables and sounds. In our own alphabet we have twenty-six letters, capable of infinite combination. Our numerals convey ideas of sum and quantity to any figure. In these inscriptions from the tusk, however, the fifteen signs double in number by being reversed or inverted. The language of the tusk may be more perfectly expressed than our own, with tones, inflections and shadings of which our writing is incapable."

Kioga, who had never realized the significance of his discovery, heard the words with deepest interest, as did we.

"Egyptian hieroglyphs were first deciphered by Champollion, from a Greek translation on the Rosetta Stone. His discovery moved the date of written history back in time thousands of years. I hope to do as much for the people whose writing is here," declared Munro, his eyes alight with scientific fervor.

"The writing on the tusk ran not lengthwise line after line, as does our own, but spirally, round and round the tusk, from tip to butt. I quickly found that out. But the clue which put me on

the trail is on this wall. Can you not also see how several of these signs resemble Indian pictography?"

We could not but agree with him. Munro continued:

"One sign in particular—the symbol of the dove, a branch between its mandibles, occurs most frequently. . . . What tribe does that suggest to you, Kirk?"

"The Mandans," I recollected suddenly. "Whose beliefs resembled Christian Scripture."

"Exactly!" Munro agreed. "The only blue-eyed Indians in North America. With that clue before me, and having a knowledge of the Mandan tongue, I could perhaps go ahead, keying the Mandan syllables to the signs as written on the tusk and on this wall."

And while we watched, Munro concluded his translation, which as later perfected read:

And honor to our kings, descendants of the mighty line of Ru the Merciful, who ruled six thousand suns ago. Preserved be their monuments and citadels, preserved their herds and sacred to the labors of our kings.

Rise up, O Sacred One, and bear this favored prince who goeth forth to learn what is beyond, whereof to bring us tidings. For know that seven centuries ago, our wise men read the heavenly bodies and calculated that the earth was round and had many times the compass of our kingdoms.

O shade of Ru, behold this prince, his princess, his slaves and all his retinue; watch over them, that all may soon return to Mandha. And if this be, we people of the sons of Ru shall sacrifice an hundred slaves to thee.

"What does it mean?" I asked when Munro had done.

"It means that somewhere in Nato'wa there was a tribe of blue-eyed, copper-skinned men who spoke and wrote a language similar to Mandan."

"But what about the tusk? How did they come by that?"

"They probably found it, just as today the tusks of mammoths are found on the Ivory Isles of Siberia. The mammoth became extinct here in the Arctic, you know."

So spoke a scientist whose learning was of the outer world. The Snow Hawk, listening, knew things about Nato'wa as yet unknown to modern science. Munro did not especially notice his odd preoccupation, but would recall it later.

"We're on the trail of prehistoric man," he went on enthusiastically. "A race who at one time were masters of an unknown kingdom, prisoners of their environment. Centuries ago the people whose artist drew these pictures on the wall set forth upon a strange migration to the outside world. Some were successful, and reached America—as the Mandans. The great remainder somewhere met with tragedy—and where more likely than in these very caverns?"

Flashpan glanced about uneasily. Tokala's eyes grew great with apprehension of the silent dark beyond the fire. Kioga sat expressionless, but presently rose.

"Come, we will run the clues all down before we leave."

ONCE more we moved, still deeper into the caverns. . . . Kioga, in the lead, paused suddenly. A darker chamber loomed ahead. The torchlight threw into dim relief a scene weird and unnerving.

The cavern was filled with whitened skeletons of men. Among them Munro picked a way gingerly. The still remains lay all about as if they had been overtaken by some lightning-swift catastrophe. Some lay at stretch, as if the end had come while they slept; others had crouched before a fire in a circle. The embers of the ancient blaze were undisturbed. Upon the long-dead coals the strange utensils of the band still were perched; in them could be seen the shriveled dry remains of that supper, so tragically interrupted centuries ago.

Kioga glanced among these dead indifferently, as one to whom death and its evidences were a commonplace.

Not so Munro, who found on a large round metal jar the signs he sought to link these dead with those who had been mentioned in his translation. Without a word he pointed out a duplication of the dove, the horn and others of the picture alphabet.

By now the Snow Hawk's interest was aroused, and glancing round among the bones, he saw that some wore round about their upper arm-bones broad copper bracelets, each of seven links, each ornamented with a sign; and pairs of these skeletons were shackled together at the wrist.

The great majority were grouped about two skeletons of smaller size, one of a young girl, the other of a youth. The girl had worn a clasping golden circlet, etched with pictures in the man-

The sentry advanced suddenly. "Stand back, Ogoya," said a tall warrior.

ner of the tusk and jar. The youth wore on his breast an oval plaque, of gold inlaid with copper, the whole depending from a fine-worked silver chain. The plaque was also filled with carvings. The better to decipher them, the scientist removed the plaque and hung it on Tokala's breast.

Awhile Munro studied. Then, "'*Behold this prince, his princess, his slaves and all his retinue,*'" he quoted. "'*Watch over them, that all may soon return.*' Here is the tragic ending to a bold adventure."

TOKALA stood up straight and tall, the better to do justice to the regal ornament he wore. Observing him, James Munro laughed. "It does become you, son. I hardly think the poor dead prince will ever miss it."

"You mean," Tokala said, with shining eyes, "that I may wear it?"

"Why not?" the scientist replied. "But keep it covered with your shirt, to preserve the etchings. We won't disturb the circlet on the princess' neck." He turned away, glancing about as if in search of something else.

Kioga chanced to find what Munro sought, beyond the farther entrance to the chamber. A mighty skeleton lay there, the dry bones of some enormous animal, too great for passage through the door which had given entrance to the prince and all his retinue. Other slaves lay near the bones. Still attached to the giant skeleton, were moldering remains of what had been a splendid caparison, held together in decay only by the delicate warp-threads of imperishable copper-gold with which it had been worked. The great saddle, formed of wood inlaid with ivory and horn, fell to pieces at a touch.

A close comparison flashed into mind. Once in the jungles of the Far East I had seen the like—the bones of a great bull elephant. Munro was triumphant at his discovery. "So ends the mystery

The supposed sentry answered . . . "Why play with him? I'll mark him for a coward."

of 'the Sacred One'!" he exclaimed. "And if anything were needed as a proof of what it was, here it is." He held aloft an implement of bronze some four feet long, equipped at one end with a hook beneath a sharpened point—unmistakably a goad.

I HAD not grasped Munro's implication on the instant. He was patient. "Recall the words of the translation—*'Rise up, O Sacred One, and bear this favored prince.'* This, I should say, is the Sacred One."

"An elephant—no, a mammoth," I declared.

"The mammoth was an elephant," said the scientist, "and now our picture is complete. Upon this brute—sacred because it probably was the last of its kind alive—the youthful prince set forth to find a world which he knew nothing of. There lies the prince, last of his line. Here lies the last of living mammoths, the elephant of the Arctic. Kirk, you're looking at one of the greatest finds in the history of the North."

"Scalp me," muttered Flashpan, "if I don't wish we'd move along back where we come from! They may be dead, these fellers, but they give me the willies just th' same."

"A little longer, Flashpan," said Munro. "See if we can't find some traces of where they came from."

Flashpan shook his head uneasily. "The curse o' death is on this place. No good will come o' tryin' to seek out a dead race. But I would rather go than wait behind with these fer comp'ny. Lead on, Kioga. I'll stick with ye."

Again we moved ahead seeking to unravel the mystery of these folk who had fallen victim to some unknown form of death. Further researches added nothing to what we had already found. Our advance blocked by a solid wall, we must perforce return.

Outside these Empty Lodges, the Shoni hostiles likely had abandoned us.

We now turned back as we had come. As we descended through one of the lower chambers, the Snow Hawk paused and stepped abruptly back. His torch threw light upon the steps before him, which we had earlier ascended.

Black water rimmed the way up which we had come.

MUNRO drew sudden breath, and every man knew instantly that he was trapped, retreat—as he had come—cut off.

"Perhaps we're on the wrong trail," suggested the scientist.

Kioga shook his head. "I know the way. This is the trail. The waters of the river have come up—perhaps a cloudburst in the mountains swelled them. . . . A bursting subterranean spring could have done the same. If that is so—" He paused.

Munro was quick to see his meaning. "If it is, we may never be able to pass back as we came here."

"We must go forward, now," Kioga agreed, "because, although we have water, we have no food."

He bent, cupped water in a palm and put it not to lips but to nostrils, then flung it back and dried his hands. "Unfit to drink. Poison, most likely."

The needs of men ofttimes assail them suddenly. Until this moment, absorbed in our researches, we had thought little of food and water. But with the realization that neither food nor drink were now available, we suddenly grew hungry and knew thirst.

I thought of the statistics I had heard. A man may live for weeks without food, but only for days without water. Thank heaven, that at least we had fresh air to breathe. The thought had scarcely come when Tokala clutched Kioga's arm, then sagged, and would have gone down had not the Snow Hawk caught him.

"My head's a-swimmin'," muttered Flashpan.

Kioga sniffed the air suspiciously, then flung at Munro: "Gas—or sulphur."

Munro stood rooted, smelling the air with an expression which cannot be described. His words betrayed his thoughts with dread suggestiveness. "Good God—not even air! This was how those people died."

Asphyxiation, death for lack of oxygen, dark in which no torch could burn to light the end—the thought of it was full of a terror that grew by leaps and bounds. One knew in such a moment the thoughts of men who, while at labor in the ocean depths, have found their air-lines cut; of men entombed in mines whose shorings have collapsed; of men in sunken submarines whose every breath brought nearer the inevitable end.

"Quick!" came Kioga's voice like cooling spray on our quivering nerves. "Follow me." Tokala hung limply in his arms, breathing heavily as Kioga bore him upward. Close on his heels Munro followed heavily, and after him Flashpan and I, our breath all catching in our throats.

Now for a little time the air was free of taint, for we moved faster than the vaporous thief of life which came behind. A rocky tube led downward to some unknown place. The Snow Hawk paused, confronted with a fateful choice—to return where the wall had barred us back; or down this other path which led he knew not whither. How temptingly that unknown pathway beckoned!

The Snow Hawk turned the other way. He who in time of danger acted with a courage bordering on the reckless, now favored a course which seemed bereft of reason and good judgment.

BACK at the wall, Tokala revived sufficiently to stand alone. While once again we faced that barrier which seemed impassable, Kioga gave his reasons for returning.

"The men whose bones we found came by this route. The brute which accompanied them could never have passed through that unknown passageway below. Either they came through solid rock, or else—" He paused, deep in a speculation known to him alone.

His quick eye scanned the rock before us as if to pierce it through. While Munro held a torch, Kioga went on hands and knees, feeling with his fingers along the base of the wall. The others watched, conscious of the thickening air.

Now with his knife Kioga scraped at the rock, then introduced one of our rifles crowbar fashion into a crack he thus uncovered. Upon the butt he threw his weight, and in the fitful light a rough rectangular block was seen to shift the fraction of an inch. Inch by inch the block moved under leverage until Flashpan and I could add our labor to Kioga's, and strain against the stone.

The air was now rank and oppressive. Munro sank with a gasp, and Flashpan held up the torch he dropped. The little miner's face was wet with sweat and

ghastly in the light, when he too lost his strength. With what energy still remained me, I then wedged the light between two stones, powerless to aid Kioga further, and conscious of a terrifying physical nausea and weakness.

The Snow Hawk turned to scan us swiftly, saw Tokala's dark head nodding heavily and Munro lapsing into stupor. Hope for the others now depended entirely upon him. The great block stood well out from the wall. Kioga bent and caught the corners. All the power of his mighty frame was in the several successive jerks he gave it. The block moved forward—then seemed jammed.

Kioga gasped for breath. Even he now felt the choke of slow asphyxiation. He rallied, tugged anew. The muscles on his back tensed up like cables, and on his arms the veins stood starkly out. If ever lives hung on one man's strength, ours did in that long moment.

Now Kioga drew upon his last resources, putting every ounce of force remaining him into one tremendous effort. It seemed we heard his joints crack with the strain. Then came a heavy *thud*, and instantly a rush of air—musty and of a peculiar odor, but like an ocean breeze to us who stifled in a fog of sulphurous gases.

A black rectangle showed in the wall, and through this aperture Kioga lifted Tokala, took great draughts of fresher air into his lungs, and then returned to help the rest of us through.

WHEN all were safe beyond, Kioga returned, filled the opening with stones—fallen from the roof—which lay here and there, and filled in the cracks with earth and small stones, the better to seal out the fumes which had so nearly overwhelmed us.

That done, he turned, and by the dim light of the torch saw that he stood at one end of a lofty vault in which the air, though stale, was fit to breathe and proving revivifying to his companions. Upon the floor he glimpsed a cup-shaped empty vessel. In it was a length of strawlike cord, and instantly he caught its close resemblance to an ancient lamp. Presently he came upon a little jug, sealed at the mouth with hardened clay, which gurgled when he shook it. Cutting through the seal, Kioga smelled a fragrant scent and saw oil on his fingers. He poured oil from the jug into the lamp and lit the wick—only just in time, for the torch was sputtering out.

Now by the light of the newfound lamp Kioga pursued his search, a definite hope and object in mind. For if men had come through here, however long ago, their steps could be retraced to some outer place where man could see the stars and feel the breeze of freedom again.

He did not at once find exit from this vault, but in his search came on great urns and jars, likewise tightly stopped with covers of clay. Within these tight-sealed urns was water, curiously flavored, and dry hard kernels as of wheat, or some like grain. Of these urns he took one each back to the others of us.

IN the dim light of the lamp we ground the kernels in our teeth and washed them down with economical drafts of water. Thirst and appetites appeased, we gained new strength to seek the second exit from this vault. But deep in the shadows at one side we made disheartening discovery: A cave-in had destroyed the exit.

Attacking the broken rock, we finally emerged into a tunnel measuring certainly not less than fifteen feet from floor to roof. Upon the walls were deep marks, as of tools. Here too were skeletons of men, apparently trapped while laboring. The tunnel extended only a hundred feet, ending in broken rock beyond our powers to penetrate.

But in the wall close to the tunnel roof there was a blacker recess in the wall. Bounding up, Kioga found a hold and drew himself aloft. Here was a ledge quite wide enough to stand upon, and just beyond it, unmistakably, an inner chamber.

Kioga moved ahead into a second room, smaller than the first. Upon the floor lay skeletons again, two large, one small. Unmoved by these dry relics of the dead, the Snow Hawk glanced about. This room had the appearance of a dwelling, for contrasting with the catacombs that had been left behind, doors opened off on every side.

Kioga called this information down to Munro, then chose a door at random. Of heavy lumber, spongy with decay, it fell through at a shove, into another chamber whose entrance proved to be near the roof above the level of his head. So for an hour he moved upward as in the compartments of an ant-hill. And in each one only relics of the dead remained. Since all were supplied with grain and water in sealed jars, since all

were likewise closed by heavy blocks, Kioga knew that this was means of sepulture, and that the dead so buried in these rock-walled rooms had been supplied with food and drink against the needs of the hereafter. And Munro concurred when Kioga brought back news of it.

Further progress found us rising far above the level of the first chambers. It was as if we climbed some cruder ancient counterpart of a modern skyscraper, save that there were no lights, nor lifts to carry us aloft.

BY Munro's calculations we had come over twelve miles underground from our point of entry, and had climbed somewhat more than five hundred feet since entering the chambers of the dead.

"Which ought to bring us out somewhere beyond the Mountains-that-have-no-tops," the scientist added.

The chamber which we next encountered proved empty, save for a store of jugs, jars and baskets exceeding any we had seen before, all filled with grain and water. But here was something we had not encountered before—a strong door, of some richly paneled wood. A moment Kioga stood before it.

We knew his thoughts, and felt them too. The vast proportions and imposing solidity of that portal suggested something unusual to come. The bar was made to be raised from either side by means of a copper chain. Kioga raised the bar, and the barrier creaked open. We hesitated on the brink of the unknown, then stepped across the threshold, as if into another world.

Unlike the rough undecorated walls below, here every inch of space was hewn and carved with wondrous artistry. Arching pillars everywhere were cut into the hard volcanic rock, of which the walls were formed. In niches in the walls fine vases rested; the furnishings were massive carven chairs and tables. The very floors were overlaid with gleaming wood, incised with figures of men and animals, with everywhere the sacred symbol of the mammoth predominant.

We sought for dead in vain. None were visible, as in the catacombs below. On entering this room, we had come a step above the civilization of the lower chambers. The departed, it presently appeared, all rested in great etched copper coffins.

"They left their dead to occupy the dwellings they had used in life, then sealed up the rooms and never entered them again," said Munro. "Then up above the one-time dwelling they occupied another home, which upon death was given up in favor of yet another dwelling higher up."

The words were true. We literally moved upward through successive layers of some strange civilization. Happily the custom of entombing grain, oil and water with the dead prevailed. Lacking food and water and light, we must have perished in the lower catacombs, days before our climbing had brought us to this huge burial-chamber wherein the exit was choked with broken rubble.

Again we ate of dead men's food, then lay to rest preparatory to the morrow's search for exit. And yet "tomorrow" was merely the term we now employed to indicate the periods between our sleep. There was no other way of ascertaining the time of day or night save by this roughest kind of calculation.

At least our sleep had heretofore been deep, down in these silent tombs of the speechless dead. Tonight our slumbers were interrupted as by the sound of rolling thunder. Kioga was the first afoot, and had one ear against the rocky wall, seeking to orient this first outer sound which we had heard since entering the lower catacombs.

There was a pause enduring perhaps five minutes. Then again that rolling rumble muttered through the silence. Thunder, yet not thunder—too quickly begun, too quickly ended. Silence once again; followed by the heavy *tramp-tramp-tramp* as of an army on the march, and soon thereafter rumblings anew.

Munro stood stiff and tense. Flashpan listened at the wall beside Kioga. Munro's eyes leaped to mine, in sudden comprehension.

"Those sounds are made by men—by living men!" he cried.

WE counted twenty such disturbances, too regularly timed to have been volcanic rumblings. Then suddenly the noises ceased. Instead there came a heavy intermittent *thud-thud-thud,* as of some mighty battering-ram against a castle gate, continuing for hours at a stretch, until this also finally ceased and silence held its sway again.

Disturbed by these impacts, rubble began to flow through the larger opening. Clearing it aside as quickly as it came chuting in, we saw an exit forming. Up this the Snow Hawk went and

Kioga put every ounce of force remaining to him into one tremendous effort.

called back hollowly that we should follow.

Obeying him, we seized his rope and clambered up. In the chamber at this newer level, light streamed through a heavy quartz-like glass which lined the chambers at one side—the first daylight which we had seen in no one knew how many days. By it we now glimpsed that which made us catch our breaths.

We stood at one end of a regal chamber. The floors were lined with silken skins of tiger, snow-leopard, bear and many more. The walls were hung with richly gleaming draperies. The furnishings were of a highly polished wood, carved in the shapes of birds and animals and ornamented thick with gold and copper appliqué.

Along the walls hung weapons, cunningly devised; great maces, war-axes, bronze knives and daggers, light but sturdy bows of horn and bone, with curious cords of twisted hair, and bronze-tipped arrows in square cases at their sides.

Of these Kioga appropriated a dagger, long bronze sword and bow with arrows. The others armed themselves with half-swords, axes or such other weapons as seized their fancy, for by this time each man had realized that we were almost face to face, not with the age-old dead alone, but with a race of living men, for this was patently a very recent entombment.

Among the shadows of one corner a shape took form, lying upon a platform raised above the level of a man's chest. Upon it a figure stretched, covered to the waist with robes embroidered heavily with golden-yellow figures. Before this dim, reclining figure, stood a small figure of a mammoth of stone. Upon its back were bowls of food and drink. Against the dais rested axe and shield of copper-bronze.

A shock awaited those who looked upon the figure's face. The eyes were closed. Undoubtedly the man was dead. But in the cheeks was color; in the jet-black hair the gloss of life remained. The veins stood out, even as in life, upon his hands, crossed on the breast. An expression of majesty was on the hawklike face, so lifelike that it seemed at any moment he must rise demanding what this motley group of intruders were doing in his mortuary chamber.

Tokala backed unwittingly into the chamber just beyond the platform. He turned, took one swift glance about the other interior, then wheeled and fled into Kioga's arms. His show of fear threw apprehension into ourselves, until the Snow Hawk thrust him gently to one side and entered the other chamber.

THE reason of Tokala's fears was plain: this was a sacrificial chamber. Here lay the slaves and household attendants of the dead king in the other room. Like him, each one seemed merely to sleep. Three maidens, garbed in robes of cloth and gold, lay nearest to the door. Four youths came next, still linked together wrist to wrist as in life, no doubt the ruler's favored slaves. Ten maturer warriors were next ranged in a semicircle, weapons in their hands, as if defending the dead king. Then came a row of women, sumptuously clothed in richest robes, their thick dark hair filled with innumerable golden ornaments.

Other evidence proved this a very recent burial; for in the sacrificial bowls, the wheatlike kernels were not yet dried out. The meat, besides, had not the juiceless hardness of that found in the lower catacombs, but yielded a decided flavor, as of coarse and grainy beef.

Now Kioga paused before a door of intricately chased bronze. He laid a hand upon its polished grip and twisted.

The mechanism worked without a sound. The door swung inward, slowly, due to its heavy weight. There came a rush of air, pure, clear and wonderfully sweet. As one, we all moved toward that open door, gazing out upon a vast expanse of star-shot sky, the moon agleam in bright relief against it, like some highly polished silver medal.

Beyond the door we glimpsed a kind of platform. Out we strode to feast our eyes upon a night-time sky which we had not seen for long uncounted days. It was the northern sky we saw, for we had emerged upon the north side of a mountain range, whose peaks rose towering at our backs.

MUNRO had calculated rightly. The mountains which the Shoni called the Topless Peaks were now behind, and ranging out of view to east and west. The platform on which we stood was near the apex of the cliff-tombs, which below us, tier under tier, ran deep into the earth.

Slanting irregularly earthward down the sloping wall below, there was a stair, hewn from the solid stone. From the platform no way of gaining it could be perceived. Undismayed by its apparent inaccessibility, the Snow Hawk tied his rope about one of the stone pillars, dropped the other end over and clinging easily, slid downward to reconnoiter the wall beneath.

He soon returned with information that the stair which we had seen could be reached. By a similar use of the rope, whose bight he passed beneath our armpits, the Snow Hawk lowered each man upon the stair whose landing he had discovered. Himself following, he then retrieved the rope and passing it among us, like a safety-line, led the way downward toward those lights still flickering far below.

Frequently along the stair there were broad platforms, before the tombs carved into the rock. At each of these we paused to look down, each time a little nearer to amazing discovery. But long before we reached the bottom, the lights became obscured. Clouds and a heavy mist blotted out the moon, now shedding but a vague gray glow to light our way.

In this poor light there suddenly was heard upon the stair below the sound of human voices, chanting. Armed only with the weapons found in the chambers of the dead, uncertain of the force which now approached and of the kind of greeting to be expected, we took quick cover on the nearest platform, in the shadow of a portico at the entrance of a cliff-tomb.

A moment passed. The voices grew louder. A glow appeared ahead. Then round a bend there came a strange procession. Two muscular figures, unshod and almost naked and bearing smoky torches, led the way. Immediately behind five dark-skinned warriors followed, in helms of simple unworked metal. These men were girt about the loins with skins and from their belts depended daggers and small long-handled axes. Each one bore on his shoulder a kind of mace. Their features were regular and strong, but their expression was hidden in the semi-darkness.

Next came two other slaves with heavy pads upon their naked shoulders. Upon these pads there rested long curving wooden handles, attached to an ornately carved and decorated palanquin, supported on its other end by two more slaves, who raised their portion by means of handles built lower on the conveyance. Thus, though the ascent was at an angle of more than thirty degrees, the equipage rode quite level, its seat facing outward from the wall.

Five other warriors, equipped as the first, were succeeded by two more torch-bearers. Although the procession moved with regal dignity and the low and musical chanting continued, to our complete surprise the palanquin was occupied by no one. Continuing upward, the odd procession passed from view.

Withdrawing from his hiding-place, Kioga led us downward once again. The mist was heavier. The glow from down below was much diffused and nothing there was visible. The descent, too, became blinder, for at this point the stair ran downward through a crevice in solid rock, walled in on either side. With danger of a fall removed, Kioga coiled in his rope that linked us man to man, that each might be free to use his weapons should the need arise.

Thus cautiously the final descent was made, when almost at a last turn in the stair we paused to listen. The quiet, hitherto conspicuous, was broken by a sudden bedlam of shrill yells, mingled with a curious hoarse chorus of sound.

Urged by curiosity, we reached the platform which marked the bottom of the rocky stair, and from this point of vantage gazed out dumbstruck upon

a scene of confusion, color and activity unequaled anywhere on earth.

Upon our left a high cliff towered, the base of the mountain of which the rock tombs were a part. A great hole made a black half-circle, its flat side resting on the ground. Out from this tunnel there emerged majestically a double row of stately brutes, chained one behind the other, hauling mightily against their heavy breast-straps.

At sight of them I felt a thrill run through me. Low in the quarters, high in the shoulders, bearing each before it a curving pair of polished curving tusks, I recognized those lumbering great-bodied forms. No naturalist could fail to know the monstrous head, the muscular, thick, prehensile trunk, the thin wide fanlike ears, the entire beast clothed with a mat of coarse dark hair. They were, beyond a doubt, a species long believed extinct—mammoths, elephants of the Arctic, trained to the service of men in this, their ancient range and last stronghold, the polar north.

Upon each shaggy head a naked figure sat, a goad in hand. These mighty creatures, numbering in all fully fifty beasts, dragged from the mountain side great flat-bottomed sledges, piled high with blocks of stone. No sooner had a sledge emerged than from all sides a swarm of naked unshod men rushed, hastily uncoupling the vehicle from the chains.

The mammoths, thus detached from their load, returned hitched to an empty sledge, into the tunnel, trumpeting in unison as when they had emerged.

NOW from the outskirts of that human milling herd a dozen smaller beasts moved in. Upon them sat men garbed in white and orange shirts, each one of whom possessed a long, thick-handled whip. Now we saw that which explained the status of the naked shoeless men. For as they hauled and struggled with the sledge, the long whips sang forth and cracked among their sweating bodies.

Sometimes a man went down beneath the press of other slaves. Rarely did he rise, for at this sign of weariness, several of the shaggy mounts were guided to the spot, and the whips laid cruelly on until the luckless creature lay out still and silent, whereafter the mighty beasts were driven rough-shod over him, the other slaves then following.

Although we did not know it then, these fallen slaves would not be wasted.

The stone, it now appeared, was being hauled by human labor to some destination beyond view from our platform. Scarce had one load been borne away when another appeared, dragged in the same manner from the tunnel, to the accompaniment of the same bedlam of outcries. Another swarm of slaves rushed forth in numbers evidencing the cheapness of their toil. When again the field was clear we saw two of the herd men return, cast ropes about the feet of the fallen slaves and drag them by the score out of sight, indifferent to the moans of those who still had life left in them.

ABSORBED in this spectacle, combining grandeur, novelty and callous cruelty, we stared aghast and speechless, when suddenly the Snow Hawk turned, and gave a shout of warning.

The alarm came too late. Descending on us swiftly were the band who earlier had gone up the stair. They swept upon us, pinning Munro, Flashpan, Tokala and myself before we could offer more than a feeble resistance, and thrust us into the hands of the barefoot slaves who had borne the palanquin.

Kioga was not so easily taken. Armed with the thin bronze blade he received the first upon its point and ran him through. In falling, the warrior's weight wrenched the sword from Kioga's grasp, whereat he seized the club the other dropped and swung it in a mighty arc, to crush the second attacker in his tracks. Another fell, his skull cracked open like a melon, and those who followed him drew back, before a well-aimed missile from above had laid the Snow Hawk limp and motionless on the platform.

By now the mêlée about us had gained attention from below and presently we were the center of a yelling mob whose movement bore us down into the clearing. Now through that howling press the herd-men cleared a way, trampling all who stood before them.

And thus, securely bound and dragged along without resistance in their path, we passed beyond the clearing toward a near-by city now dimly visible in the moonlight.

We hardly dared conjecture our fate; judging from the threatening mob surrounding us, short shrift would be our lot.

What may the adventurers expect, from a race which places so slight a value upon human life? Read the next exciting installment in the next—the May—issue.

The Break's Tonight

MANNING was worried, deeply worried. The old forger, who was now behind these bars for the rest of his natural days, watched his cell-mate with a knowing eye. Something was wrong with Cotterel. Something was brewing and stewing in the younger man. Within this past week, Cotterel had lost his ardent, impulsive spirit; he was brooding.

Not that he lacked cause. Cotterel was a lifer too, cut off from the world just when life was sweetest and at its bloom. Unlike the older man, Cotterel was not guilty; of this, Manning had convinced himself. The murder charge had been pinned on him by circumstantial evidence. Cotterel took it on the chin, took it like a man; but the long weeks and months must have their toll, and now something was wrong.

Between the two men existed a liking, a friendship, as deep as it was rare. The regulations here were not too severe; they could talk at will, Manning could have his brushes and sketches, Cotterel could have his books. Yet it was prison. And Manning, who had acted from his experience as buffer for this younger man, who had saved him repeatedly from errors of impulse and passion and despair, could sense that some new crisis was upon them.

It came out one evening when, the recreation period over, they were back in their cell together. Cotterel, who had been silent all day, suddenly voiced his thought, as they sat side by side.

"I'll be leaving you soon. It's my one regret: that I'll be leaving you."

Manning started slightly, as an inkling of the truth flashed over him. He bent a penetrating regard on the other man, a look of almost terrified questioning. Cotterel's lips twisted in a bitter grimace, and he nodded.

"It's Frenchy Doran," he went on, defiantly. "He's got everything fixed; he's taken me in on it. The break's for tonight, Manning. You needn't argue against it, either. Oh, I know you mean well, you want to save me from any mistakes, but save your breath. This time it's going through. Two can make it; everything's arranged, I tell you."

Manning's uneasiness was frozen into actual terror. He knew Frenchy Doran, and distrusted the man acutely. Why? He could not say. And Cotterel, he perceived, was in no mood for argument.

He did not speak; he could not. Manning was dumb. Slowly his hand lifted. He began to speak with his fingers. In these long months, he had taught Cotterel the language of the dumb, and Cotterel had become fluent in it. Now, with his deft, slender fingers, the artist-forger made words.

"My friend, I sha'n't argue against it; I shall only wish you luck, now and ever. What argument could I use? I have none. I can only say to you, what Mary Fallon said to her lover, Johnson the smuggler."

His hands fell. Cotterel frowned a little and looked up.

"Eh? Who was Johnson?"

"A rather famous fellow who had quarters in the Fleet Prison in London, a hundred and thirty-five years ago—in 1802. A daring, desperate man who had served his country with such heroism that he was pardoned; then he resumed smuggling, was caught, was clapped into Fleet Prison, and was facing a death-sentence. You know, they executed a man for almost anything in those days. And Johnson, who had been about to marry this Mary Fallon, was jerked to prison almost from the altar."

COTTEREL gave him a wary glance. "Yes? And what was it the girl said to him?"

Manning's gray and wrinkled features did not reflect his inward fear and anxiety. He knew better than to betray it. But the very name of Frenchy Doran made his heart contract.

"Something vitally true in all life, Cotterel," came the reply from his long fingers, from his earnest gaze. "Something true now, this very minute; and yet rather difficult to understand."

"One of your psychic notions?" Cotterel smiled as he spoke, not with ridicule but with affection.

Manning shook his head.

"No; nothing mysterious or hidden, and yet not easy to grasp without know-

Illustrated by
Earl Blossom

A hunch—"The heart has its reasons, which reason itself cannot understand"—is a vital factor in this fascinating third story of the "Strange Escapes" series.

By GORDON KEYNE

ing all the circumstances. It's a grim and ugly yarn, but damned heroic all the same. As you know, Fleet Prison was reserved for debtors, and Johnson had been put there for his debts, while the more serious case was being prepared. He was a desperate fellow who stopped at nothing—young, rash, impulsive, with clear brave eyes and a stout heart. Just the type to fall into some rascal's trap. Your really heroic man gets taken in by a smooth tongue, most of the time."

MANNING paused, not attempting to point his words in the least. He knew that Frenchy Doran had one of the slickest tongues going. He was sure that Cotterel was in a trap, but he did not say so. He was a wise old chap, shrewd, remarkably intelligent, and this young fellow had become like a son to him.

His fingers began to move again. He spoke of Johnson, and the historic old Fleet Prison, close to Fleet Market—a landmark of ancient London, where many a famous man had been housed for debt. Johnson's cell, with a tiny barred window, was in the very heart of the prison. They were taking no chances with this man, whose reckless and desperate character was well known. Johnson had even vowed publicly that he would never remain caged up to be hanged or deported.

He was given liberty enough—a daily walk in the court, communication with other prisoners or visitors. And today he had a visitor, who came upon him as he was talking with Jem Daly. A "flash" gentleman was Jem, glib of tongue, and suave of manner, and resting here for a burden of debt that would have dismayed many a heartier man.

Mary Fallon came upon the two of them in the "yard," and Johnson introduced his companion, who thoughtfully left the two of them alone. A loitering guard kept his eye on them to see that the girl passed over no contraband article, but remained out of earshot.

If Mary Fallon was not lovely, she had a true, fine eye, and the inner beauty that comes from a clean true heart; she could see under the skin of a man, and if she found great things in the smuggler whom she loved, she could also find less noble qualities in men who were of better repute. It was no harm to be a smuggler in those days, when half Sussex and Devon was in on the game.

Johnson held her hands and looked into her eyes, and it was well that the guard could not hear the words his gay laugh concealed.

"Tomorrow night and each night, my dear," said he, "be waiting with a coach and four at the end of the Fleet Market. Write to my old partner at Brighton, George Huntley; tell him to have his lugger ready, hanging off and on the cove we know at midnight of each night. I'll signal him with four lantern-flashes."

The eyes of the girl dilated, her cheeks paled.

"No!" she exclaimed. "You—oh, do you mean it?"

"Faith, and I do, my dear!" Johnson laughed eagerly, confidently, and pressed her hands. "Tomorrow night if a chance offers; if not, the first night it does."

"But how on earth have you managed it?" she said, staring at him. "Why, only two days ago you said there was no hope, that the very thought of escape was out of the question, that no one had ever escaped from this dreadful place—"

"That was two days ago," and Johnson chuckled. "I've made a friend, my dear; the man you just now met. He has friends, influence, powerful connections. His own escape is all arranged. He's taking me in with him."

"That man?" The girl drew back. Her clear gaze clouded. "No—please! Don't have anything to do with him. Don't join him in any escape."

"Eh?" Johnson was astonished. "You'd rather see me swing?"

"Don't be absurd. I'd not want to see you involved with him, however."

"Why? Jem Daly's all right, isn't he?"

SHE shook her head. "I think not. I've no reason to feel this way—"

"Then forget it, my dear," cut in Johnson briskly. "Look you, it's a bargain for one and the other. He gets me out of here, has it all arranged. In return, I get him across to France in Huntley's lugger. Mind you get the word to Huntley—you have his address in Brighton, in care of the Crown & Bells."

"Still I don't like it," said Mary Fallon. "I don't know the man; I don't need to know him. I tell you, don't trust him! I'll not send word to Huntley, unless you promise me here and now not to mention him or the lugger to this man."

Johnson's brows drew down. His rugged, vigorous features were angry.

"Very well; I promise. I'll guarantee him passage, that's all. And now, in the

name of heaven—why? What have you got against him? You don't even know him."

"I've seen him. Why, you ask? Perhaps because I love you; and perhaps—" The girl hesitated. Then:

"The heart has its reasons," she said earnestly, "which reason cannot understand. I can't explain, my dear; I can't argue with you. I've no words. I can just feel that this man isn't to be trusted."

"I'll prove that you're wrong," and Johnson laughed again. Then, as the guard approached with word that time was up, he kissed her quickly, and saw her away with a smile.

"I don't need to know the man," said Mary Fallon; "I tell you, don't trust him!"

He laughed to himself whenever he thought of her words. Not trust Jem Daly? Why, it was on him that Daly's safety depended! Daly could manage the job here in London; but getting out of England was another thing. Only Johnson could do this—the smuggler who knew every lugger, every skipper, every hidden cove, along the coast. Not trust Jem Daly? Stuff and nonsense!

Yet, now and again, he thought of her strange words: *"The heart has its reasons, which reason cannot understand."*

Next day he met Jem Daly, who asked about the lugger.

"Leave that to me," and Johnson winked. "All set, my lad; the moment we're out of these cursed walls, the job's in my hands. It'll go off like a rope in a greased block, be sure of that. When do we move? Tonight?"

Jem Daly shook his head. "No; we can't spring the trap tonight. The rope ladder's not ready. It's set for tomorrow night, an hour before midnight. The rear wall's the place. That cursed front wall over Fleet Street is seventy feet high—too high. The other's only forty."

For an instant Johnson was seized with dismay. He had told Mary Fallon to wait near Fleet Market, which adjoined the far wall of the prison. However, this would not matter. If he and Daly got over the prison wall at the rear, they could circle around into Fleet Street and so gain the coach. Thus, he said nothing about where the girl was to await them—no use causing trouble, he thought. Besides, Jem Daly came in with a puzzled question.

"What about your cell? Are you sure you can force out the inner panel?"

"Aye, damme, sure! I tried it this morning," said Johnson. "Not the outer one, however. And if you can't get any keys for the two doors, you'll have to force the outer panel—it can be forced inward, but not outward."

"I can do that, right enough," said Daly, and eyed the slim-waisted figure

"So, you dog, you'd peach—and turn me in for money, would you!"

of the smuggler with envy. "Sink me if I don't believe you can get out through those holes! It's more than I could do. Then, you'll be listening for the crunch of the panel?"

Johnson nodded. "Right. Where's the rope ladder to be given us?"

"Rolled up and thrown over the wall, a few minutes before eleven. That's another reason it must be the rear wall —the front one's too high for 'em to throw it over. And further," added Daly, "if we went over the front, we'd have a watchman to think about in Fleet Street. There's none at the rear."

Johnson assented, but it occurred to him that Jem Daly was finding a lot of reasons to tackle that rear wall, when the one fact of its height was reason enough.

When he was locked into his cell for the night, it was his own impatience which operated, curiously enough, to reveal the frightful gin of treachery laid so invitingly before his path.

His cell, or rather room, had an inner and an outer door, set with different locks to make it doubly certain that the inmate would stay put. Those locks, also, were expressly designed to obviate any effort at picking them. It was confidently asserted that this was the most escape-proof cell in the entire prison. The man inside, however, invariably has sharper eyes than the man outside.

Johnson had observed one thing forgotten, or never known, by anyone else. Above the doors had originally been set a pane of glass, the width of the door and some eight inches high. In each instance, the glass had been replaced, no doubt at some far distant date, with a panel of wood. The panels had been applied by a workman elevated between the two doors. The innermost, cracked with age, could be forced from within the cell, as Johnson had found to his own satisfaction. The outer panel, however, could not be attacked with any success except from outside, since it must be forced inward. Thus, with the help of a confederate, Johnson might hope at least to leave his cell. When Jem Daly had broached the idea of an escape, it was at once evident to Johnson that he was as good as free—in which Daly concurred.

Now, when he was locked in for the night, Johnson reflected impatiently that he might not hear the crunch of the outer panel when Daly forced it, unless he first sprung the inner panel. A turnkey would look in on him at ten o'clock and take away his light; but he could force the panel a bit now without any risk that it would be noticed, and accordingly he went to work.

DRAWING his stool to the door, he mounted it. He had no tools, but required none for this job, the panel being split and warped with age. Johnson put his weight against it, hammered with the ball of his fist, and the nails gave until the panel, at the top, was out a good inch and ready to fall away at one hearty shove. Satisfied, Johnson descended from the stool, took it back to the table, and picking up a quill, began to compose a letter.

This letter was addressed to the chief jailer, and detailed in proper impudence the entire scheme of his escape—without mentioning Daly. When he had finished it, Johnson perused it with a chuckle and tucked it out of sight.

It was nearly ten o'clock when the chief jailer and turnkey appeared, took a cursory look around, removed the light, and departed. The inner door was locked. Then, as the turnkey fumbled for his keys at the outer door, Johnson heard a laugh, and the voice of the chief jailer.

"Keep away from here the rest of the night, Jarge. If ye hear noises, be deaf.

It's a break for liberty—the hard 'un inside there goes over the back wall, and into the arms of the sojers. It's bullets he'll get—"

Johnson stiffened incredulously to the snatch of talk. He heard more; a cold hand clutched at him. The voices came clearly enough through the gap he had made in the panel. Before the two men closed the outer door and departed, he had heard what made him weak and sick—positively sick. He had never before come to close grips with black treachery; he had never guessed there could be such vileness behind a mask of comradely friendship.

JEM DALY had not only split on him, but was taking him over that rear wall to be shot down or caught in the act of escape—probably to be crippled and hanged.

They were afraid of him. . . . They wanted to be rid of him. And Jem Daly was getting money for it, and a free pardon. No doubt whatever of all this, since each detail of the escape was known, even to the rope ladder measured to fit the rear wall. No one else could have peached. Daly was the man!

In his agony of spirit, in his terror, in his bitter burning fury, Johnson all of a sudden lifted his head. He remembered the words of Mary Fallon; he could comprehend them now. *"The heart has its reasons—"* Aye! In happier days he had marveled at how she could read a man for good or bad. Now, in his eagerness, he had forgotten this, had refused to admit there could be anything to her distrust of Daly. Well, she had been dead right. It was an old trick. He had heard of it more than once; to turn in another prisoner and be rewarded for it. No wonder Daly had been so anxious to get everything out of his mind except that rear wall; the Judas was making delivery there!

Johnson began to pace up and down his room. Little by little, his tumult of mind quieted. Settle with Daly? Yes, by God! But that was not all. He caught at the farther thought, juggled it, turned it to his purpose in a fervor of hope. Why not, indeed? Why not swing the whole damned treacherous scheme to work his actual escape?

He sank down on his cot and stared into the darkness. Undoubtedly, no one would be watching that front wall—that seventy-foot wall. A rope ladder made for a forty-foot wall would not reach, of course. But he remembered, now; ten feet above the street, on the blank face of that front wall, were street lights. They were placed on immensely solid iron brackets embedded in the wall and projecting four or five feet. Good! If he could reach one of those, the distance was cut to sixty feet.

A forty-foot rope ladder for a sixty-foot descent? Hardly. Then, suddenly, Johnson leaped to his feet. Jem Daly had a knife, had boasted of having it, only today. A rope ladder has two sides. Take twenty feet of rope from one side, attach it to the other side with the deft skill of a seaman—and it becomes sixty feet over all. Twenty feet of ladder, at the top. Forty more feet of line, which any seaman could descend hand over hand, even bumping into a wall as he descended! Well, it would be no child's play either, but—

"I can do it if any man can!" muttered Johnson, clenching and flexing his hands in the darkness. "I can do it, turn the tables on 'em all, and make it safely! If by any chance they have sojers waiting in front—well, I'll run that risk. It's not likely. They depend on that rat Jem Daly to lead me into the trap."

At thought of Daly, he flexed his hands again; strong hands, hot with the flame of rage that rose in his heart.

And then, upon his decision, came the crunch and splinter of wood. The outer panel was being forced. There, at least, Jem Daly was keeping his word. Fast, then, fast! Act, before they surmised anything amiss with their bloody treachery!

Johnson stripped to shirt and breeches. In savage haste, he pulled his stool to the door and mounted on it; his fist knocked out the loosened panel. The two doors were close together, were indeed almost a double door. From close ahead came another crunch as the other panel was forced in. He reached through to it, caught it, and tore the wood clear. The voice of Daly came to him in a guarded word.

"Johnson?"

"Aye," he rejoined, and started through the double opening, arms first.

IT was a struggle. Twice he thought himself stuck and done for; but each time he tore himself through and on. When at last he was in the clear, and with a final heave and twist let himself go for the fall, Daly was there to give him a helping hand.

Johnson came to his feet with a growl. "Let's have that knife of yours."

Jem Daly thrust it into his hand in the darkness. Johnson pocketed it—and then he had the other man by the throat, holding him in a grip of steel.

"So, you dog, you'd peach—and turn me in for money, would you! I know the whole thing. Rear wall, says you, and the sojers waiting there to take me—and you with a pardon and a purse of guineas. How much are they paying you? Speak up!"

He relaxed his grip slightly. Jem Daly tore at his arms with ineffectual fingers, and gasping words escaped him.

"Twenty guineas—and—and I had to do it—"

"You don't have to do it now," said Johnson, and clamped in his fingers before Jem Daly could get out a scream.

There was the confession, had he needed any, to sink his iron grip into that throat. He clung, while Daly's struggles grew weaker and ceased, and the man went limp. Then Johnson flung him aside, careless whether he lived or died, and slipped out into the "yard."

A few dim lights burned feebly. There were no guards; the prisoners were locked in each night, and this sufficed. Grudging each moment of delay, Johnson sped for the rear of the place. It was all dark here under the wall; he suppressed an oath as he began to fumble and peer about. He realized for the first time what a task he had set himself without a light—to find a bundle that had somehow been hurled over that wall. Or perhaps it had merely been left somewhere, by a turnkey in on the scheme.

Minutes passed. Desperately, he began to quarter the ground, in panic lest there be no ladder at all and his whole plan gone flittering. That meant he would be taken for murder, if Jem Daly were dead.

HIS foot caught on something hard that tripped him. He felt for it, and his fingers came on the curved prong of a grapnel, then upon ropes snaking across the stones. With a heart-leap, he gathered up the grapnel, the rope ladder; a burst of relief that was almost beyond endurance drew a gasp from his lips. He trembled with the swift transition from despair to hope. Then, turning, he headed for the front of the prison. Stairs, and the top of that high wall!

Seventy feet—it seemed a frightful, incredible gap to bridge, as he craned from the edge and looked down. But there below him the lights glimmered; the street was empty; there was no clump of booted heels. He must take the risk of passers-by while he was descending, and of the watch. He had no idea of the time; he did not know when the watch came by.

With the knife, he worked swiftly. He armed out one of the side ropes, guessing at the three-foot lengths; twenty feet of it. Then he cut it, and made his splice, and a better splice he never made. His life depended on this one.

It was all done, at length. He crept along the wall until he came directly above one of those lights on their iron brackets. The bracket would hold him, all right; just such brackets had held many an aristocrat in Paris, ten years back, when the mob swung up their victims *"à la lanterne."* He made fast the grapnel, waited for one last moment to peer down and listen. Nothing there but emptiness and silence. Good! The ladder went down, the single rope below it.

THEN, to his horror, Johnson saw that something was wrong; the rope was short of the bracket. He stared down for an instant, took a deep breath, and reached his legs forward. Short? No matter for that. He could drop to the bracket, drop again to the street. The bracket, in fact, was wide and stout; he could even drop astride of it, with a bit of luck. No backing out now!

Aware that those street-lamps lit up the whole face of the wall, Johnson wasted no time in his descent. He came to the ladder's end, got the single rope below in between his feet, and went on down, hand over hand. It was no child's play, as he had warned himself. He swung and bumped against the wall until he had to cling there in frantic effort and wait for the motion to stop.

The glare of light from below crept closer. He paused and looked down, judging his distance, his chances. Not so bad, after all! The rope was short, but he could hang by his hands from the very end of it and almost touch the bracket with his feet. Yes, no trick at all to drop astride of it, and no time to spend doing it, either.

He went on. His feet were past the rope's end now. He lowered himself carefully to the very limit, swung with his back to the wall, poised himself there, and looked down. The dazzling lamp blinded him for an instant. Then

he could see the bracket clearly. Yes, he could make it without trouble—

"Past eleven o' the clock, and all's well! Past eleven o' the clock, and all's well!"

Cold sweat broke out upon him. The voice was down there, not thirty feet away; the voice, and a shuffle of feet. A watchman, crying the hour, coming past the prison. And he here on the rope, clinging with his hands, unable to cling long, hanging in plain sight on the wall!

Already poised, he let go abruptly. It was a short fall; he caught the bracket as he landed astride. Exactly as he had figured, his shoulders came back against the wall and stayed him from any overbalance. He was secure.

And upon this, a low gasp of agony rose to his lips; he checked it there. Terror clutched at him, the frightful realization of a hurt all but mortal. He put a hand to the iron-work on which he was poised. His fingers found what he had failed to see—a sharp projection of iron. Frantically, he clutched at his thigh; the whole length of it was torn, from knee almost to the hip, horribly torn by that projection. The blood was spurting, seeping through his fingers as he held cloth and flesh together in a supreme effort.

For, almost directly below, the watchman was shuffling along.

"Past eleven o' the clock, and all's well!"

A ghastly grin contorted the lips of Johnson. Why, the dark blood was dripping almost on the man below! But the figure passed on, never glancing up or around, the monotonous voice ringing out and lessening. Even had the watchman looked up, those lights would possibly have dazzled him.

ONE last, terrible exertion, and Johnson swung himself over the bracket, hung by his hands, and dropped. It took all his nerve, all his iron will; when he struck, it was with a rush of agony that wrenched a groan from him.

He stirred, moved, came to his feet. No soldiers here; all was well. But when he tried to walk, he collapsed. His leg was soaked in blood. New terror took hold on him, lest he bleed to death, lest his strength flow out. Desperate, he dragged himself along below the wall, teeth grimly set.

He forgot, however, that some one who was no enemy had been awaiting him.

She came suddenly, running, a man's figure following her. With low cries of pity, of tenderness, she was helping him; the man lent a hand. Johnson, between them, was staggering toward the waiting coach and four. Near the last light, he ordered a stop; the terrible wound must be bandaged before his life flowed out. He stretched himself on the stones, ripped off his shirt, and the driver of the coach tied up the ripped flesh, tied it hard and stoutly.

Then they went on again, and were gone—off for Brighton and the secret cove, and the lugger of Huntley bound for France and safety!

The prisoner of the Fleet had escaped.

SO, with the end of his story, Manning's slender, artistic hands drooped and his long fingers were still. He glanced sideways at Cotterel. The younger man was sitting with a frown of absorption. He looked up, and a queer ugly light was stirring in his eyes.

"You know, Manning, I've always had a lot of respect for your hunches," he said abruptly, almost as though he had not been listening to that story at all. "And that's the best definition of a hunch that I ever heard—the heart has its reasons, which reason can't understand! Yep, it's true, too."

Manning nodded, a little wearily. His fingers fluttered again.

"I suppose we'll be saying good-by pretty soon?"

Cotterel merely grunted. After a moment, he made reply.

"I've been wondering about one or two things. Frenchy Doran is pretty thick with one of the screws, for instance. Hm! D'you suppose he'd get a pardon if he spoiled a break?"

"Absolutely."

Cotterel drew a deep breath. All his moody excitement had vanished; he was more like himself again. A smile came to his lips. He turned and met the eyes of Manning, with a long, slow regard.

"I owe you a lot," he said simply. "Just how much, it's hard to realize. No, we're not saying good-by—not tonight, anyhow. Put her there, Manning."

He extended his hand. The older man met it with a quick grip, and Cotterel smiled again.

"The heart has its reasons—yes, I guess that's right. I may kick myself for it—but I'm staying. Let's turn in."

Another vivid story in this fine series is scheduled for our next issue.

DE YAR of

The Civil War—"a gentlemen's war, compared to modern ones"—is the background for this fine short novel by a new writer whose work you will be glad to see again.

IF the Reb cavalry really licked us at Trevilian Station it would be the only time they ever turned Phil Sheridan back. We fought them two days with one hand and tore up five miles of the Virginia Central railroad with the other. That night—June 12, 1864—we did, for a fact, turn around and start back north toward Fredericksburg. Say we were licked—what interests me is the things that happened as a result of it.

To begin with, my horse lay down. That did not catch me napping, because he made a practice of lying down, generally in brooks. Stump Parsons pulled out of line and rode back. Stump was my tent-mate and the best friend I ever had; in the three months since I'd joined the regiment as a recruit, at Warrenton, he had whaled me into some resemblance to a cavalryman. If it hadn't been so dark, now, I could have seen the bullet-welt across his forehead that he got snatching me away from Stuart's cavalry at the Yellow Tavern, four weeks ago. Stump said:

"Grab your duds and come on."

That meant we would share his horse, turn-and-turn. But I was too worn out to walk. Besides, Stump would be tired too, and I didn't want to load myself on him.

"This horse is too mean to die," I told him. "He'll get up as soon as he finds out this isn't a brook."

The sergeant yelled, "Close up!" so Stump only had time to call me some barracks names and ride on. Of course the horse was dead, and I couldn't blame him. With the five weeks' marching and fighting he'd had since Spotsylvania, he had a right to die. I stripped his equipment and lugged it into a field, out of the dust. I thought I might catch a ride in a wagon, or get a led-horse. But everything on wheels was full of wounded and there weren't any spare horses left.

Toward daybreak the last squad of Jersey horse-marines came along and the officer wanted to know all about me. I told him I was Thomas Dale, Tenth New England, and I was looking for transportation. He said if I stayed where I was the Johnnies would presently give me transportation to Richmond.

"You'll have to leg it to Fredericksburg," he said, "or across to West Point. . . . That's the rendezvous."

A little rat in the rear rank called back:

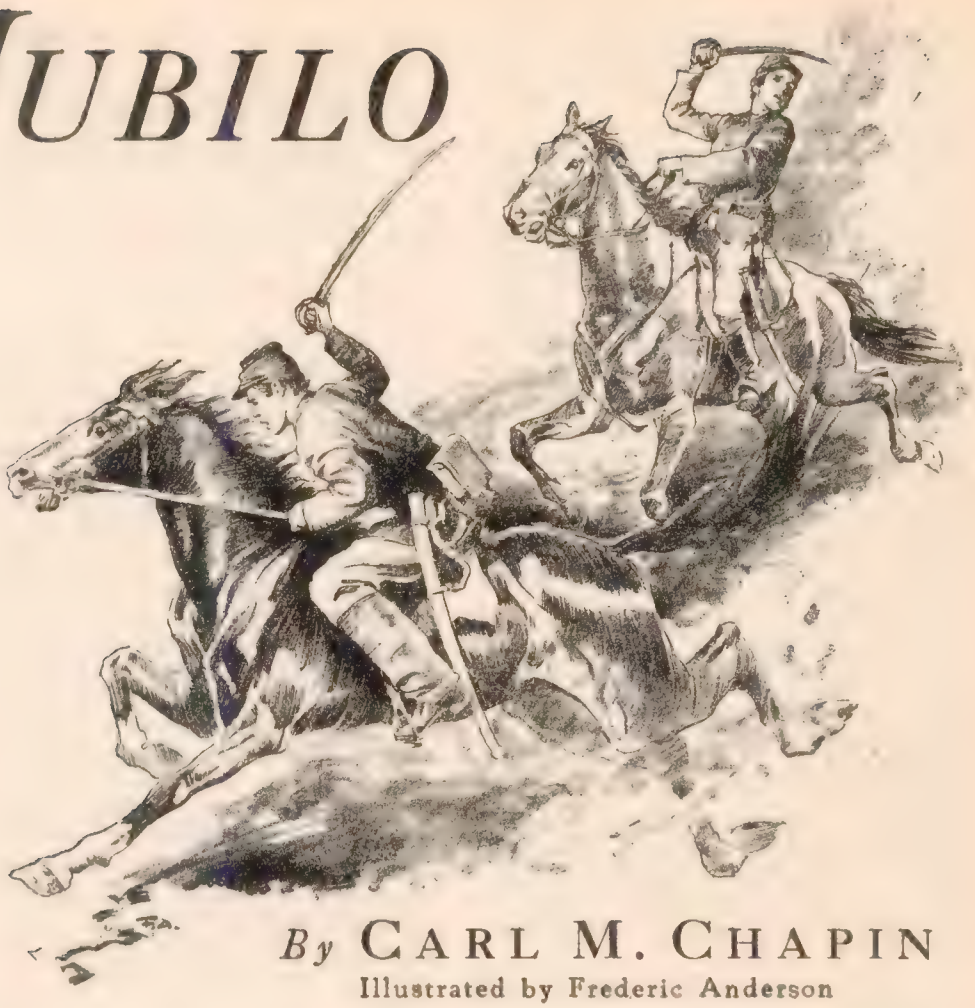
"And tote your saddle with you, Yank. . . . Two months' pay!"

It was good advice, but it didn't cheer me up any. Fredericksburg would be forty miles north, and West Point was sixty or eighty east. A McClellan saddle is a load, without counting carbine, saber, pistol, blanket and what ammunition I had left. And cavalry boots were never meant to walk in. I began to wish I had gone along with Stump Parsons, but now that it is all over, I am glad I didn't. It couldn't have saved Stump, and I shouldn't have been in a position to avenge him. Besides, I should have missed the affair of Happy Singleton and Virginia Olyphant and Major Botecour. I should hate to have missed that—now that it is over, I mean.

SO I ate the bits of hardtack in my haversack and drank the last of my water. Then I slung the saddle over my shoulder on the butt of my carbine and started on. By ten o'clock I was marching through a burning furnace, and I had learned what it is that makes the infantry so useless. Hayfoot-strawfoot, over those Virginia roads, day in and day out, would ruin any man—a foot of dust when they're dry, and two feet of mud when they're wet. But the infantry doesn't have to march in cavalry boots with sabers pounding their ankles. My feet felt as though they were bedded in hot coals. All I could find to eat was one turnip with a bad spot in it.

Before noon I threw the saddle into the North Anna River. I was tempted

JUBILO



By CARL M. CHAPIN

Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

to throw my carbine after it, but in those six miles I had come across the bodies of three of our stragglers, stripped naked, riddled with bullets and their throats slashed from ear to ear. In that land of bushwhackers, a carbine would be handy—if they gave me a chance to use it.

I turned east on the road that led through Chilesburg and Pole Cat, and down the Mattapony to West Point. We had come up that way and I knew the roads. It would be safer, too, for the bushwhackers and maybe the Reb cavalry would be trailing the corps north to Fredericksburg.

It must have been ten miles down that road, with my eyes half blind from sweat, that I almost tripped over the body of Stump Parsons, lying on his back with that Yellow Tavern bullet-welt an angry red against the grimed paleness of his face. My heart leaped, raced and seemed to stop. I gazed down stupefied, my mind stunned beyond the power to think. I could not believe it, and even when belief was forced upon me, I still could not grasp it. It was as though, like the crack of a shot, the whole world that I knew had been blotted out. It was beyond my power, just then, to imagine a life in which there would be no Stump Parsons to care for me.

WHEN my brain began to work again, I realized Stump must have been carrying dispatches from Sheridan to Grant, to be off here alone, like this. He was good at it, and they often used him. He was fully dressed and armed, and he had not been mutilated, so it was not bushwhackers who had done it. Even the Johnnies would have taken his arms and his shoes, perhaps even his clothes, because they needed things. Some one who was neither regular soldier nor one of the thieving irregulars who claimed to act as soldiers had shot him in cold blood from ambush—and that was murder. That thought, as it slowly came

home to me, cleared my mind and gave me a new impulse of living which was never, for one instant, to falter until it had achieved its purpose.

I reached into Stump's breast pocket for the notecase he carried—fine pigskin with his initials, *"F.L.P."* in gold. I thought his mother would like it. It was gone, and so were the dispatches, if he had been carrying any. There were boot-marks in the dust, and scuffled horse-prints, as though Stump's horse had been led away. It was his own horse, a racer he had picked up, lame, over in Fauquier County before the campaign opened. It did not wear the "U.S." brand, but there had been a queer hooked scar on the left shoulder, and Stump and I had touched it up with a hot ramrod to make a sort of *"P"* for *"Parsons."* You could recognize that horse anywhere.

I took Stump's things—his watch and knife and small money and trinkets—to send to his mother. Then I dragged him under a tree and set about digging a grave in the field. The clay was sun-baked, like brick. I had to pick it loose with my saber and scoop it out with my hands. It took me the rest of the afternoon because I was half-dead with weariness. My hands wore raw and the nails were broken to the quick. Sweat, and sometimes tears, stung my eyes blind.

THE sun was setting when I rolled Stump Parsons into his grave and tramped the dirt down on him. I covered it with such rocks as I could find, so the hogs couldn't root Stump out and so, perhaps, I could find him when the war was over, and take him home. Then I picked up my carbine and set out to find the person who had killed him. . . .

Presently I came to a lane running off through oaks to a great plantation house, far back. There was candle-light from a window and door but no one answered when I knocked and called. I entered the broad hall. The lighted room was a parlor with a single candle burning. Behind it was a dining-room with the table set for two and on it a great slice of ham, and sweet potatoes and a mound of white biscuit. The food was hot.

With my carbine under my arm, a candle in one hand and my pistol in the other, I dragged myself through the house from bottom to top. It was clearly inhabited, but I found no one, and that meant danger. Nevertheless I had to eat if I died for it. Outside the kitchen, I found a basin and water and even soap. I washed my face and soaked the crust of clay and blood from my throbbing hands, as well as I could. Then I went to the dining-room, leaned my carbine against the table, laid my pistol beside a plate and was just sinking into a chair when a woman's voice said, from the doorway:

"Yank, put up your hands!"

IT was a soft, slurring Southern voice, and I think it was the sweetest I had ever heard, in spite of the sharp note of anger and hostility. But it was a determined voice, and I raised my hands, as ordered. The girl in the doorway was slender and rather tall with cropped brown hair above an oval face that seemed cut from warm ivory. She looked boyish and capable in a shirt which opened in a deep "V" at the throat, and a pair of blue jeans tucked into riding-boots. A woman in man's clothes was a new experience to me, and it rather made the blood sing in my ears. She wore a holster at her belt and was pointing an unwavering revolver at my chest.

A smaller woman with snowy hair peered past the girl, her gentle face wrinkling in a quaint expression of anxiety. She wore black with bands of severe white at throat and wrists. In the background I got a shadowy impression of staring white eyeballs in black faces.

"Why, Ginny," the older woman exclaimed, with whimsical relief, "he's nothing but a boy. Put that pistol down."

The girl said: "He's stealing the silver, Mother."

"Nonsense!" the mother retorted. "He's nothing but a boy. It's likely the food he's after. Are you hungry, child?"

She thrust forward to the table. The girl lowered the revolver and stood sullenly dangling it.

"Yes ma'am," I said. "I haven't had anything, today, but two pieces of hard-tack and a turnip."

"You poor child!" I thought I resented her tone, but I cannot be certain. After all, though I professed to be twenty, I was only sixteen; and after what had happened, I suspect I was ready to be mothered a little. "I fear the food has cooled," she went on. "We were frightened, you see. . . . We cannot be sure of our visitors, in these times."

She actually seemed to be apologizing for a failure in courtesy. She rang a

small silver bell. "Oh," she said, "I am Mrs. Olyphant. This is my daughter, Miss Virginia. You are—"

I told her I was Private Thomas Dale, Tenth New England cavalry. A big negro mammy appeared in response to the bell. Mrs. Olyphant said:

"Phœbe, you may prepare a place for Mr. Dale."

The negro woman surveyed me with lofty scorn. "Miss Alice," she declared, "y' ain' gwine eat wid Yankee white trash, no ma'am!"

Mrs. Olyphant said, with placid severity: "Do as I tell you."

Phœbe grunted angrily, but went about it. Mrs. Olyphant turned to me again. "You are in the cavalry? I wonder if you know Lee Garnett. . . . Sometimes they call him 'Happy.' His mother was a Virginian—my dearest friend, as a girl."

"Oh, Mother," the girl protested impatiently, "there are a hundred and fifty thousand men in the Yankee cavalry. How should he possibly know Lee Garnett?"

Nevertheless I thought she seemed interested. I said with resentment: "We haven't got more than fifteen or twenty thousand cavalry." The Secesh were always exaggerating our strength about ten times. "The only Happy I know is Happy Singleton. He's a corporal—I don't know what regiment—not in Sheridan's corps."

"What is he like?" Virginia bit the question off as though angry at herself for asking it.

I told them I thought Happy Singleton was about twenty-five years old, and that he was rather slender with sandy hair and blue eyes and freckles, and a wonderful baritone voice. Mrs. Olyphant said, with conviction:

"That must be Lee Garnett. But I do not understand why he should use another name. Or, perhaps I do—in the Northern army. Oh," she exclaimed, noticing my hands, which had begun to bleed again, "you have been wounded?"

"No ma'am," I said, "I've never been wounded, yet."

I told her about finding Stump Parsons and burying him, and how he had saved my life and all he had done for me. Glancing up, I saw Virginia bending forward tensely with a sort of horrified look in her wide eyes. I realized

I set about digging Stump's grave; I had to scoop it out with my hands. . . . Sweat, and sometimes tears, stung my eyes blind.

"Miss Alice, y'ain' gwine eat wid Yankee white trash!"

that it was not a pretty story for a young girl to hear, though she must have been four or five years older than I was—really a grown woman. She looked away, quickly, and leaned against the door with a pretense of nonchalance. Mrs. Olyphant's lips were pressed tightly, and there were tears in her eyes.

"And you dug his grave with your bare hands?"

"Yes ma'am," I said. "I didn't have anything else."

She swallowed rapidly, then said with a brusque gentleness: "Come—we must cleanse those fingers."

She led me to the kitchen, soaked the wounds clean and bound them up with ointment, each finger separately so that they were like sticks. When we returned, Virginia was tramping nervously up and down the hall. She glowered, but followed us as far as the dining-room door. Phœbe brought back the food, freshly heated. As Mrs. Olyphant and I sat down at the table, Virginia cried:

"Mother! Surely we are not going to *eat* with him!"

"Virginia!" her mother reproved, then added: "You may eat with Phœbe in the kitchen, if you prefer."

"I do—much prefer," the girl snapped.

I am afraid I grinned. She lifted her chin, disdainfully, and strode off. Nevertheless I noticed that Mrs. Olyphant did not eat with me. She confined herself to assisting me—cutting my meat and spreading butter and honey on the feathery biscuit which scornful Phœbe brought, piping hot, from the kitchen. She smiled at the way I ate, and presently I found myself telling her all about our poverty-stricken life at home—how Mother had had to teach school and take boarders to get food enough for us four boys. Once more there were tears in her eyes.

"So," she commented with gentle bitterness, "the North, too, is sending its children forth to kill and be killed. . . . And women bear the burden."

Just then I caught the faint sound of a man's voice talking, I thought, with Virginia. Heavy steps came down the hall. I reached for my pistol and had half-risen when he appeared in the doorway. He surveyed me, then barked:

"'Tenshun!"

I clicked my heels and stood rigid. The man wore the uniform of an infantry major in the United States Army. He was dark, and extraordinarily handsome; tall and strongly built with rather piercing eyes and regular features. He must have been almost forty years old. He carried a campaign hat in his hand, as he bowed with elaborate courtesy.

"Madam," he asked, "is this man troubling you?"

Mrs. Olyphant replied stiffly: "This young man is my guest, sir."

The Major seemed taken aback. Virginia appeared suddenly, beside him. She said, protestingly but with a curious note of hesitation:

"Mother, this is Major Botecour. I have asked him to have supper with us—if—if your boy has finished."

I SAW a look of surprise flash into Mrs. Olyphant's eyes. Then she inclined her head, as though in distant acknowledgment of the introduction. "Of course," she said coldly. "We shall be finished in a moment."

The Major's face flushed darker. He cut the girl's protest short with an abrupt gesture. He said with dignity:

"I ask pardon for intruding, Mrs. Olyphant. It is my duty to question this man. . . . Then I shall go, at once."

He had a soft, drawling voice, almost like Secesh, but more crisp. Although he appeared to be a friend of Virginia's, her mother clearly did not know him and did not intend to. I realized, suddenly, that she had been kind to me only because she regarded me as a child, and thus not to be held responsible for being a Yankee. The girl apparently scorned me because I was a bedraggled Yankee private; but, it seemed, a Yankee major was an entirely different matter.

Then suddenly I remembered who this Major Botecour was—the English aide

on the staff of the Blank Corps. We had rescued him from a squad of Johnnies in the woods that second day of the Wilderness when we were sent down to Todd's Tavern to brush Stuart's cavalry off General Hancock's left ear—and a right smart fight we had doing it.

But of course he couldn't be expected to remember me. When I explained how I happened to be there, he said gruffly that I had better be getting along. Mrs. Olyphant said:

"This boy ought to sleep in a bed tonight. He is worn out."

The Major's lips twisted. "The cavalry prides itself on being immune to fatigue," he said. "And this is dangerous country for stragglers. He will be safest traveling at night."

RELUCTANTLY Mrs. Olyphant had to accept this. She said to me: "If your Happy Singleton is really Lee Garnett, tell him, please, that his Aunt Alice loves him as she always has, and that he will always be welcome at my house."

"And tell him for me," the girl Virginia burst out, "that if he comes here I shall shoot him—"

"Ginny!" her mother protested.

"I mean it," Virginia raged. "I'd like to shoot every dam' Yankee in the world, but I just especially can't endure—renegades—"

Anger seemed to choke her. Her face flushed, and her eyes, instead of snapping, were now filled with tears. The Major seemed displeased. I hastily said good-by and slipped away. Just beyond earshot of the house, Major Botecour overtook me. His manner was less sternly formal. He said:

"I must warn you, Dale, that this Corporal Singleton is suspected of being a Confederate spy. It will be wisest not to give him Mrs. Olyphant's message. . . . It might mean more to him than appears on the surface. And you are not to mention my presence here to anyone. My mission is an important one and could easily be ruined. Understand?"

I said: "Yes sir."

"Good. . . . I noticed a path to the road through the woods, just beyond the smokehouse. It will save you a mile and—well, the lane may not be entirely safe for Union soldiers."

I stared after him, considerably puzzled. No one in the world could be less like my idea of a spy than the utterly irresponsible and irrepressible Happy Singleton. Yet as I had just learned, he was half Virginian, a close friend of these bitter Rebel women; and it came to me suddenly that he had always seemed to me strangely unattached for a cavalry corporal. I was always finding him in the most unreasonable places.

Abruptly Mrs. Olyphant appeared out of the darkness. "Sh-h-h!" she warned. "Phœbe is making sandwiches. Wait under the gallery. I will fetch them directly."

I had barely taken post in the shadow of the high porch when I heard steps above me, and muffled voices. They paused directly over my head, and Virginia's voice said:

"No, Phil, no. . . . You know I didn't intend—"

"Never mind that," Major Botecour's voice broke in. "We've only a moment, darling. You promised—"

She uttered a vague, impatient sound of acquiescence. Then there was a long silence, and I was disgustedly certain that he was kissing her. I would not have thought even shoulder-straps could have induced her to kiss a Yankee; and then I remembered that he wasn't really a Yankee—merely an English dispatch-carrier; practically a noncombatant.

Then the Major's voice: "Ginny! Oh, my darling—"

"Sh-h-h!" she interrupted pettishly. "I don't want Mother—"

They had moved out of earshot, and a few moments later Mrs. Olyphant returned with such a parcel of food as I could scarcely crowd into my haversack. She cut short my thanks.

"There, there, child. . . . Please try hard to find Lee Garnett and give him my message, won't you? . . . There is a path to the road from the smokehouse—it is much shorter. Good-by, and God bring you safe home to your mother."

SHE drew my head down, kissed me and was gone. As I moved away, I thought I heard a stirring in the shrubbery; I froze, holding my carbine ready, but there was no further sound. The moment I started on I heard it again, but once more there was no repetition. I found the path and followed it through the woods, shoulders crouched, carbine advanced and eyes and ears alert, trying, in my clumsy way, to achieve the manner of the dismounted skirmisher as set forth in the "'41 Tactics."

My state of mind approximated panic. I had not the slightest doubt that the

maker of those stealthy noises was after me; very little more doubt that he was the man who had killed Stump Parsons.

Once I stopped, thinking I ought to go back and warn Major Botecour. But since he had warned me, he must be aware of the danger. In any event, I thought, there would be slight chance of my getting to him alive. So I pushed on, expecting every moment to hear the crash of a gun, and asking God, most devoutly, to give me just one shot at the man who had killed Stump Parsons, before I died. . . .

To my vast amazement I found myself safe and sound, at the snake fence which bordered the highroad. I climbed astride the top rail and was swinging my second leg over when a shot flared at me from bushes across the road. I felt the bullet sear the hinge of my jaw. The shock sent me plunging backward to the ground, and my carbine fell across my forehead with stunning force. As I lay half-dazed, I heard a horse snort, and then the soft pounding of hoofs in the dust, going away from me back in the direction of the lane.

PRESENTLY I sat up and recovered my carbine. My head was spinning, and there was warm blood on my jaw. But that was only a graze; it was the fall and the carbine which had done the damage. And I was gay mad. Since my assailant had ridden around by the lane and the road to waylay me, it might have been any of them. Major Botecour had sent me down that path—but why should a Union staff officer be way up there in the country, shooting his own men? Mrs. Olyphant had sent me down that path. Plenty of these gentle little Secesh ladies were bitter enough to cut a Yankee's heart out and eat it raw. She might have sent Ginny, and I fully believed that young lady was tough enough to do it, as she had threatened. But I could not believe it—Mrs. Olyphant had been too genuine. And Ginny did not know I was going by the path, unless one of the others had told her.

The man in the shrubbery had keen eyes, whoever he was, even to graze me at that distance in the dark.

Manifestly it was too much for my limited intellect. I felt a sudden urge to get back to Company K, where there would be a first sergeant to do my thinking for me. I clambered over the fence and resumed the march, throwing out skirmishers at every shadow which seemed to move—as most of them did. My great boots made noises that sounded to me like an infantry corps with artillery and trains.

After an hour of it my feet were on fire and my legs refused to go farther. I crawled through a fence and rolled up in my blanket. I was certain the remnants of my stockings must be stuck fast to raw flesh, but I dared not take off my boots lest I be unable to get them on again. Despite everything, I dropped almost instantly into heavy sleep.

THE sky was faintly gray when I awoke to the sound of a singing voice, approaching by the road over which I had come—a gay voice:

Say, darkeys, hab you seen de massa,
Wid de muffstash on he face,
Go long de road some time dis mornin'
Like he gwine to leabe de place?

I sat up with my carbine ready. The singer was invisible beyond a bend, but incredibly, there was only one such barytone voice within my knowledge that might be chanting down a Rebel road at that hour of a morning.

He see de smoke way up de ribber
Whar de Lincum gunboats lay;
He took he hat an' he lef' berry sudden,
Like he gwine to run away . . .

The singing rider came into sight. It was Happy Singleton, sure enough. In spite of his care-free voice, his carbine was poised across the pommel and his head was cocked warily. I clambered to my feet. The voice halted abruptly, and the carbine leaped to cover me. Then Happy relaxed and picked up his tune:

De massa run, ha, ha!
De darkey stay, ho, ho!
It mus' be now de kingdom comin',
An' de yar ob jubilo.

He pulled up, grinning. "Ho, my Alan-a-dale! I reckoned my blithesome caroling would drag you from your hole if you were anywhere along hereabouts. So you escaped alive from the ogre's den—" He broke off and grinned down at me again.

"Did you stop at Mrs. Olyphant's?" I demanded.

"Only as an eavesdropper," he returned. "And precious little good I heard of myself, eh?" His face grew somber. "In happier days I was, if I do say it, a not unwelcome guest in the Olyphant halls. . . . Heigh ho!" His

face cleared, but with a manifest effort. "Ah—Phœbe's ham and yams! Desire almost overcame discretion. I might have braved the reproof of gentle Aunt Alice—even the bullets of swashbuckling Ginny; but that Major-man daunted me. Did you have words with him?"

I said, rather shortly: "No."

Plainly this was the Olyphants' "Lee Garnett" as well as Major Botecour's Rebel spy. What was he doing around here? Surely Mrs. Olyphant had not known that he was there. Virginia had called him by harsh names, but there had been a curious nervous tension in her manner—it might have been the clumsy effort of a startled girl to cover knowledge of his presence. Actually I knew little about him; certainly not enough to be sure what might lie behind the manner of irresponsible gayety which had won him his nickname. . . . I was thoroughly frightened and confused.

Happy came to my rescue. "Ha," he exclaimed, "does the infallible sniffer deceive me, or is there food in the haversack?"

I passed him the package of food.

"Take all you want," I said. "What I ate, last night, is Phil Sheridan's idea of ten days' rations."

He ate sparingly, but returned the package to me with manifest reluctance. "Well," he sighed, "that will support the sagging belt until I can connect with my wagon-train. To recompense your magnanimity, you shall bestride my charger while I stretch my legs."

HE strode along beside me, sometimes humming softly the tune I had heard him sing. I had determined to say as little to him as possible, but after a while I began to fear he might attach significance to my silence. So I said:

"I never heard that song, before."

"What? Oh, 'Jubilo'? Ferrero's dusky warriors have been singing it on the wagon-guard. A good song—but not without its pathos. Requiem, my lad, for a gentle manner of life, which is passing forever." And he sang:

He six foot one way an' two foot t'other,
An' he weigh three hundred poun';
His coat so big he couldn't pay de tailor,
An' it don't go halfway roun';
He drill so much dey calls him cap'n,
An' he git so dreadful tanned.
I spec he'll try to fool dem Yankees,
For to t'ink he contraband.
De massa run, ha, ha—

I found myself telling Mrs. Olyphant about our life at home.

Lifting his face, he began to sniff the air. "I smell a mule," he said, "sho's yo bawn."

We rounded a bend, and there stood a dilapidated cabin, flecked with grimy whitewash.

Happy grinned up at me.

"Seventh son of a seventh son," he said, "and all things are revealed to me. Wait here."

He strode down the path to the cabin, his carbine dangling carelessly from the crook of his arm. A frowsy man stepped through the doorway with a long musket poised. Happy raised his hand and called: "Hi, Zeke!"

The man peered, then set his gun against the house and shambled forward, removing his hat. They talked earnestly; and the man, nodding assent, slouched off into the woods. Happy sat down on the threshold. I wheeled the horse until my carbine's muzzle was toward the house, and sat ready for whatever might occur.

After some time the man returned, leading a mule with a square of sacking tied to its back and a bridle improvised from rope. I saw Happy count out some banknotes. Then he returned to the road, leading the mule. His eyes twinkled as he noted the position I had taken.

"You may limber up the guns, Pendleton," he grinned. "There'll be no fight, today. And behold the worthy steed I bring you, my Sancho Panza. The horse is glorious in the charge, but the mule, he gets you where you want to

"We are curious to learn how Private Parsons' horse came into your possession."

go. And his politics are right." He pointed to the "*U.S.*" brand. "You will achieve grace in the Quartermaster's sight by returning stolen property."

I said, accusingly: "You paid money for it."

"Pouf!" he rejoined, snapping his fingers. "Merely *pourboire* to my old friend Zeke. . . . My maternal grandfather lived hereabouts. Mainly I convinced Zeke that possessing a Government mule was a good way to get himself shot—or hanged. *En avant!*"

He relapsed into his mood of somber silence, and I wrestled with fresh doubts. This new evidence of Happy's intimacy with the Secesh of the region was not reassuring. I kept a wary eye on him and wished I were rid of him. A mile or two further along, he pulled up short, and gazed speculatively at a country road which rambled in from the north.

"I reckon that will take me to Spotsylvania," he said. "Your road to the Pamunkey is straight ahead." He gathered his reins, then relaxed them and sat as though in doubt. Finally he asked: "Do you know a Frederick L. Parsons in your regiment?"

He regarded me with curious intentness. I said, grimly:

"He was my tentmate. . . . He's dead."

"Oh." It was, apparently, intended to express surprise, but I felt sure he was not surprised. "He is the friend you were telling Aunt Alice about—the one you buried with your bare hands?"

Plainly nothing had escaped his listening ears. I nodded, wondering what he might be leading up to, and instinctively my thumb curled over the hammer of my carbine. He was looking at my bandaged fingers, as he had once or twice before.

"A curious thing, friendship," he said softly. "More generous, more enduring than the love of man and woman." I stared at him in amazement, but he was looking past me. His eyes came back to my face. "And what would you do to the man who killed him?" he asked.

"I'll kill him," I said, "if I ever find out who did it."

I was looking him straight in the eye, but he met my look without change of expression. He nodded, thoughtfully.

"I thought so," he said. "But revenge is an empty thing when you get it, Tom —especially in war. . . . Well, God guard you!"

He tightened rein and rode off, up the Spotsylvania road. In a moment, with one of his incomprehensible changes, he burst into song again:

De darkeys got so lonesome libb'n,
In de log hut on de lawn,
Dey moved deir t'ings into massa's parlor
For to keep it while he gone.
Dar's wine and cider in de cellar,
An' de darkeys dey'll hab some,
I spec 'twill all be confiscated
When de Lincum sojers come.

He turned to wave as he disappeared around a curve, and the sound of his singing faded into silence. A curious fellow, I thought, and possibly not as careless and happy-go-lucky as he tried to make folks think. I sighed with relief to be rid of him, then changed my mind. How could I know what he would do now? I prodded the ribs of my mule, and keeping a wary eye out on my left flank, toward Spotsylvania, I set off in earnest for the shelter of Company K, Tenth New England Cavalry.

WITH the aid of that admirable mule and an Army transport, I rejoined my regiment, south of the James River, in time to help pick up the fragments of Wilson's cavalry after the Johnnies had chopped it to pieces for wrecking the Lynchburg Railroad. Later we went into the woods and watched the Second trying to tear up the Weldon railroad at Reams' Station.

Finally the infantry gave it up as a bad job and settled down in the trenches, where they belonged, leaving the swamps and thickets and railroads to the cavalry, which knows how. I obtained intimate knowledge of the roads and trails below

Petersburg, and that was to prove important; also I acquired dysentery which so shattered me that I was glad to take a detail as clerk in the Division hospital. And so I settled down in a fairly comfortable house, east of the Jerusalem plank road, to a winter of ease and content, punctuated day and night by the slapping of siege-guns, like the noise of piling planks in a distant lumber-yard.

I HEARD nothing more of Happy Singleton, but Major Botecour formed a habit of riding over from the Blank Corps to drink and smoke with Dr. Dowden. The Doctor always had plenty of whisky and welcomed anyone who would help him drink it and listen to what Sheridan, Gregg and Davies—or when he was especially mellow, Grant and Meade—had confided to him of the Army's secret intentions toward the Rebs. The Major did not recognize me, or at least, paid no attention to me if he did. Of course there was no reason why he should identify a plump hospital clerk with the gaunt, disreputable straggler he had met by candle-light at the Olyphant plantation.

Major Botecour sipped thin whisky-and-water while the Doctor drank earnestly and dispensed what were supposed to be the innermost thoughts of his commanding officers. It worried me, because I liked Dr. Dowden, and one way or another, it might get him into trouble. I wondered if I ought to tell him that this shiny Limejuicer was on kissing terms with the hottest Secesh fireball I had met in all Virginia. But I never knew any good to come of mixing in other people's business.

One morning late in January, I got an order to report at Brigade headquarters. Just as I was starting, Dr. Dowden called me into his office. He was several drinks ahead of schedule, and he seemed worried. That disturbed me, because he rarely worried about anything. He said:

"I gather this is provost marshal business, Tommy, and I'd go easy till I found out what it means. Never any telling what those reptiles are up to. The best strategy in this army, my boy, is never to give up any information you don't have to." I had already found that out. "Remember," he added, "the two most useful expressions in the English language are, 'No,' and 'I don't know.'"

I had deep respect for Dr. Dowden's opinion, especially when it coincided with my own. He was a civilian contract doctor, fat and shaggy and always half or three-quarters full of whisky. But the boys in the wards said that drunk or sober he was the best surgeon in the army, and he kept that hospital running smooth as grease. I decided to take his advice, though I might have wondered why he should be so excited about what the provost guard might want of a well-behaved hospital clerk.

When I reached the Brigade, sure enough, a captain named White was there from Provost headquarters at City Point, the army base on the James. He began, at once, to question me about Stump Parsons. Of course I had reported Stump's death, but I had left out the Olyphant plantation, as Major Botecour advised. I repeated the same story to Captain White—simply that I had buried Stump and picked up a mule and proceeded to West Point. His questions showed he thought there had been more to it. I began to get frightened.

Then he asked me about that racehorse of Stump's, and the *"P"* we had made out of the scar on its shoulder. He asked me if I would recognize it, and I said yes. Finally he told me that some of Kautz's cavalry had picked up Stump's horse, somewhere north of the James, with a girl riding it—in man's clothes. My heart turned a double somersault and landed in my throat. He described the girl, and asked me if I had any idea who she might be.

CAPTAIN WHITE must have seen the effect all this had on me, for he had the worst pair of eyes I ever faced—like looking down the muzzle of a carbine. My shirt was sticking to me, and I was wishing, like sixty, that I had told the truth in the beginning. There was no reason why I should conceal it—really the other way round, because I wanted to find out who killed Stump Parsons, and I tried to tell myself that anyone who had Stump's horse wouldn't be anyone I'd want to protect—not even Virginia Olyphant; and of course this girl couldn't be anyone else. Well, it was too late to pull out now, so I told him no, I didn't know any girl who might be riding Stump Parsons' horse up around Richmond.

He gave me a thin smile. "It couldn't be, Dale, that your sense of duty has been dazzled by a pair of *beaux yeux?*"

I said: "What, sir?"

"'Lovely eyes,'" he explained. "They have been known to do strange things to

lusty young cavalrymen. I wondered if, perhaps, you might be protecting the damsel from a mistaken sense of chivalry. Having recently been subjected to the power of those orbs, I should find it easy to forgive you."

HIS eyes seemed to bore right through me. I had reached a state of utter panic. Evidently enough, he knew all about it. I could only wonder why he was playing with me, like this, instead of slapping me into the guard-house, the way the provosts usually did.

"No sir," I said in desperation. "I don't like girls. But I'd like to find out who killed Stump Parsons—"

"Ah," he broke in, with alarming significance. "So that was not just an ordinary casualty, eh? And you would like to kill the person who killed your friend?"

"Yes sir," I told him, as boldly as I could. "I'd like gay to cut him up with my saber, one piece at a time."

"Ah," he said again. His eyes had softened a little. "Parsons was your friend. But suppose it should prove that a woman killed him—would you still lust to cut her up with your saber, one piece at a time?"

It was like a blow between the eyes. I had not been able to make myself believe that Virginia Olyphant could have done it.

"No sir," I stammered, desperately. "I wouldn't do that, but I—I'd shoot her."

"Tut, tut!" he said with a sort of grim amusement. "The Army of the Potomac does not make war on women—Rebel reports to the contrary notwithstanding. We warriors must humor the lovely belles of Virginia in their little idiosyncrasies—even murder. . . . Well, Dale, I fear I shall have to take you up to City Point, after all. Possibly a sight of the lady's eyes may stir memories of a fleeting roadside encounter—if no more."

City Point! That might mean guard-house — prison — God-knows-what. We drove to the military railroad in an ambulance. There was a special engine waiting for us. That gave me a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach. It must be serious business which brought a provost captain down to the lines on a special engine. It appeared to bode no good to a defenseless private with a load of needless lies on his conscience.

At City Point I identified Stump Parsons' horse. Then Captain White took me to his office, and very soon, an armed provost guard brought Virginia Olyphant in. I had braced myself for that, and I am sure my face must have disappointed the Captain's expectations. But there was a cold-blooded realism about that armed guard which brought home to me the full gravity of Virginia's predicament. She was dressed as she had been at the plantation, except for heavy woolen trousers instead of jeans, and a voluminous blue cape as protection against the winter cold. Her pistol holster was empty. Her eyes, for once, were cold and wholly without expression as she glanced briefly at me. The Captain began:

"Miss Olyphant—"

Astonishment, almost fear flashed in her eyes, but she controlled herself instantly. Plainly she had not been aware that he knew her name.

"Miss Olyphant, you know this man, I think. . . . Private Dale?"

There was an admirably scornful lack of interest in the glance she threw at me, and in her tone as she said: "Why, no."

The Captain turned to me. He said, sternly: "I thought you told me you knew the young lady."

He had snapped his glance back to her. Of course he was trying to trip one or the other of us, and it made me mad.

"No sir," I said. "I told the Captain I did not know her."

"Oh," he commented indifferently, "no doubt I misunderstood you."

IN my mind there had slowly been taking form a conviction that Captain White's apparently lackadaisical method of conducting this inquiry was, in fact, the sinister working out of a cat-and-mouse game. I felt certain that, at any moment now, he would pounce, and the result would be terrible for Virginia, and perhaps, for me. I watched him with tense anxiety as he sat squinting his eyes and rubbing his mustache with his index finger. But when he spoke, it was with the placid, almost bored manner of a routine statement:

"Our interest in you, Miss Olyphant, arises from the fact that the horse you were riding, when taken, was formerly the property of Private Frederick L. Parsons, Tenth New England Cavalry. He was shot off its back from ambush, last June 13th, a few miles west of New Market, Spotsylvania County, and robbed of dispatches which he was carrying from General Sheridan to General

Grant. The dispatches were recovered." That brought an involuntary gasp from me, but I was relieved to see that Virginia appeared wholly unconscious of any significance in it. The Captain was going smoothly on: "But we are curious to learn how Private Parsons' horse happened to come into your possession."

It was her turn to be startled. She bit her lip and hesitated as though this were something she was not prepared for. Finally she said:

"I cannot answer that. But there was no mark on the horse to indicate that he belonged to your army."

"In other words," Captain White insinuated, "the murderer gave the horse to you, but you did not, at the time, know that he had murdered its rider?"

"You are very clever," she said scornfully, "but not quite correct." I began to have a feeling that she and Captain White must share some knowledge which I did not have. She added, in a different tone: "And of course it was not murder. A dispatch-rider is fair game for his enemies."

"Not for women, Miss Olyphant," the Captain purred, "and not for civilians, nor even for soldiers who do not wear the enemy uniform."

I thought it was coming now, and it seemed to me that Virginia also braced herself for a final shock. But the Captain said, mildly: "I think that is all."

We stared at him in blank stupefaction. At length Virginia asked, in a faint voice: "Do you mind telling me what you are going to do with me?"

"Not at all," said the Captain suavely. "We propose to deliver you at the nearest point of the Confederate lines."

I think nothing he could possibly have said could have tamed her so completely. It was such an utterly fantastic idea.

"I may have my horse?" she asked doubtfully.

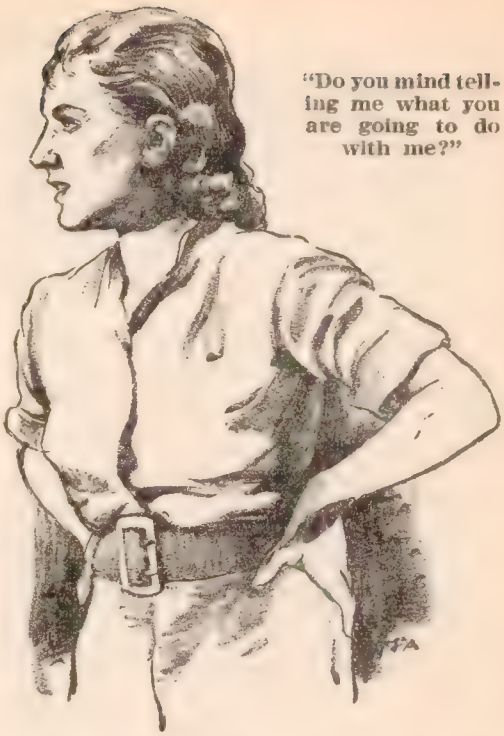
"Of course," the Captain said. "We have more horses than we know what to do with—more of everything."

It was a cruel gibe to throw at a Secesh in that lean and hungry winter. Her face flamed with anger, but she controlled it and asked, meekly enough:

"May I have my pistol back? It is not—comfortable for a woman to go unarmed in these times."

He slowly wagged his head, with a faint smile.

"That, I fear," he drawled, "is a different matter, Miss Olyphant. Gallantry forbids that we force a woman to travel



"Do you mind telling me what you are going to do with me?"

on foot, but it does not extend to the point of providing her with weapons to satisfy her lust for shooting Yankees." He paused and surveyed us both with quizzical blandness. Certainly his information seemed to be complete. "We shall see you safely into your own lines," he went on, "and there you will be entirely surrounded by Southern gentlemen, among whom, surely, no lady needs firearms."

She colored but did not retort. I thought all this might not be doing her any harm. The Captain gave me an order for food and sent an orderly to guide me. The latter stayed close by me while I ate, but I could not be certain whether or not I was under arrest, particularly as I had not been deprived of my revolver.

AS we approached the office again, Captain White emerged. He was holding the arm of a man in cavalry corporal's uniform; the man was Happy Singleton. Happy wore no arms, and he was followed by two cavalry privates with full equipment who looked shiny enough to be provost guards. Happy appeared to be pleading, and the Captain to be saying, "No," with emphasis. At sight of me they abruptly stopped talking. Happy looked me straight in the eye and turned away without a sign of recognition. His face was bleak.

Recalling Major Botecour's insinuation, I felt suddenly sick at seeing him

here with a guard at his heels and that white, strained look on his face. The Captain led him out of earshot, and they talked for a while longer. Then Happy shrugged, saluted and turned away. He mounted a horse from the picket-line and rode off down the road toward Petersburg, the two guards jingling along behind him.

Captain White strode back to me.

"I shall have to detail you to escort Miss Olyphant to Port Walthall. Report back here promptly. I will get your papers. . . . Wait here."

I felt bewildered, and also increasingly uncomfortable about my own position. I could not understand why Captain White should be setting Virginia Olyphant free—or why he was dragging me in to escort her. I wondered if, in spite of his sly pretense of knowledge, he really knew the truth about her. If he didn't know, then I would be in the position of covering up a Secesh spy who might prove dangerous. I had an impulse to break down and tell him what I knew. It lasted only an instant. This army policeman ought to know his own business—let him attend to it. The war would be over before she could do much harm, anyway. I might only make trouble for myself. . . .

An orderly brought me a horse, complete with saber, carbine and ammunition, and I signed for it all. The Captain came out with a handful of official papers—no wonder a war takes four years, with the Army spending half its time on pen and ink. The guard brought Virginia up. The Captain said to her:

"I am sending the dependable Trooper Dale to protect you from the licentious Yankee soldiery. He will take you to the river at Port Walthall. Our posts will pass you through as soon as it can be arranged with your friends on the other side."

He turned to me. "You will, of course, treat Miss Olyphant with the consideration due a charming lady in distress. But remember that she is an enemy within our lines, and as such, is not to be encouraged to count noses or sketch fortifications. She probably knows the roads better than you do. If she tries to lead you astray, bring her back here."

HE spoke the last words sternly, and directly at her. There may have been a double meaning in them. Virginia's eyes snapped, and she compressed her lips. Captain White added:

"Remember also, Dale, the young lady regards Yankees as fair game. Keep deadly weapons out of her reach. —My advice to you, Miss Olyphant, is to remain within the Confederate lines. The country outside is dangerous for uncertified civilians. . . . I wish you a pleasant journey."

Virginia inclined her head, faintly, and reined away. I fell in at the regulation horse-length behind her. Presently I noted that her eyes were busy on the military panorama, so I urged her along as fast as possible. The sleek swing of that horse's flanks stirred bitter memories of the miles I had ridden behind him with Stump astride him.

BEYOND the inner lines, where the roads were not so full, Virginia pulled back beside me. She was smiling. It was the first pleasant expression I had seen on her face, and she was wondrously beautiful. It gave me a queer feeling, and I was afraid of it. She said:

"It was right genteel of you, Mr. Dale, to tell that policeman-captain you didn't know me. I wonder why you did that?"

That smile and that "Mr. Dale!" She wasn't going to make a fool of me too!

"I enlisted to fight Rebs, ma'am. I don't hunt spies."

Her expression changed, and she said, "Oh," in a disappointed tone. "Then you think I'm a spy?"

I said, "Yes ma'am," and started to pull back. But she reined over closer and put a hand on my arm. My answer seemed to have startled yet amused her.

"Ride with me," she said. "I want to talk to you."

Her knee was touching mine, and she was flooding me with that warm, soft look. But I noticed that the butt of my revolver was within easy reach of her hand. I pulled away a pace, and said: "Very good, ma'am."

"You remember that evening at our house—you haven't forgotten that?"

"No ma'am," I said. "I guess I aint ever going to forget that day."

I looked down at Stump Parsons' horse and then back at her face. She read my meaning, and her face flushed. "Surely you do not think I shot your friend?"

I wasn't at all sure, even now; but there was no use talking to her about it, so I said: "No ma'am."

"It would be absurd, of course," she said. Then after a moment: "I am truly

sorry I was so mean to you—and you have been so kind today. I was dreadfully upset, that night."

"So was I, ma'am," I said, and looked down at Stump Parsons' horse again. I really hadn't meant anything, but she looked so uncomfortable that I said: "I didn't blame you, ma'am, and you don't owe me anything for today. . . . I was trying to keep out of it, that's all."

Really the only thing I cared about was who killed Stump—and if she was smart enough to fool that Captain White, I didn't believe I was smart enough to get any information out of her.

"Nevertheless," she said, "it was right chivalrous of you, Mr. Dale. . . . Have you seen Lee Garnett?" she suddenly asked. "'Happy Singleton,' you said you called him?"

It startled me to realize that she had actually driven Happy completely out of my mind. She must be getting hold of me, and I had better be careful. I had done fairly well with lies, so far, and I thought I had better stick to them.

"No ma'am," I said. "I haven't seen him since."

"You didn't see him after you left our house—on the road, next day, or anything, I mean."

I thought she had made a slip there, for she was not supposed to know that Happy had been around there. If she had seen him, that night, he must have gone there to see her, and that must mean that either she or Happy, or both together, had shot Stump to get his dispatches. It popped into my head, suddenly, that this might have been Major Botecour's "important mission"—making love to Virginia Olyphant to trap her and Happy Singleton. That might explain where Captain White got all his information, and how Happy came to be in the provost's hands.

VIRGINIA was looking at me curiously, and I hastened to say: "No ma'am; Happy wouldn't have any business up around that country. He isn't in Sheridan's corps."

"Oh, to be sure." She seemed a little confused, and hurried on: "Have you seen Major Botecour, again—you remember him?"

"Yes ma'am," I told her, "but of course he doesn't remember me."

"Oh, you have seen him, then?"

She had caught me there, so I had to tell the truth. "Yes ma'am," I said, "once or twice."

"He is still with the Blank Corps—where are they stationed?"

I said: "In front of Petersburg, with Grant's army."

She gave me a quizzical smile. "I suppose you think I am trying to get military information?"

"Yes ma'am."

THIS time she really laughed—the first time I had heard her laugh, and it was very sweet.

"You are *such* a straightforward lad, Thomas Dale," she said. "Really," she went on seriously, "I am merely trying to find out about the Major. I liked him."

I didn't believe that, but I said: "Yes ma'am; I guess he's different from most Yankees."

She seemed to be seeking hidden meaning in my words, but I kept my face blank.

"Of course he is not a Yankee, at all," she said. "He is a British officer, studying the war for his army. He really isn't fighting against us. If you see him, please tell him that I asked. If he asks after me, please tell him that we have left the plantation and I shall be quite safe, now, with Uncle Boyd at the Pillars. The Major thought we ought not to live alone in the country," she explained. "You will be sure to give him the message and my address? Tell him I should be glad to get a word from him, and I shall hope to see him there—later, I mean, of course."

I said, "Yes ma'am; I will tell him."

Very soon after that we came to the Appomattox River opposite Port Walthall. I finally managed to find an infantry officer with brains enough to sign a receipt for Virginia Olyphant, and by and large, I was glad to get her off my hands.

It was past dark when I got back to City Point—and I reckoned myself lucky to get there alive, those dumbheads in the Army of the James being jumpy and quick on the trigger. Captain White was still at his desk with his hat-brim pulled down to shade his eyes from the lamp. He looked fagged, but he was still gentle and courteous. He wanted to know if Miss Olyphant had given me any trouble, and I told him no sir. Then he asked me what she had said, and I told him, nothing.

"She didn't mention a Lee Garnett—or Happy Singleton? You know Singleton, I guess—it's the same man."

That smile and that, "Mr. Dale!" She wasn't going to make a fool of me! I said: "I enlisted to fight Rebs, ma'am; I don't hunt spies."

I said: "She didn't say anything about him, sir."

He looked at me so sharply that I was rather frightened. I felt relief when he didn't press the matter, for I didn't want to get Happy into any worse trouble—let alone myself.

"Hum," the Captain said. "Did she mention anyone else?"

I said, "No sir." Then I remembered that I had promised to give her message to Major Botecour, so I would have to do it, and the Captain might find out, particularly if Botecour was working with him. "At least," I said, "she just sent a message to a Major Botecour, . . . He's on the Blank Corps staff, sir."

Captain White's chin came up a little. "Botecour?" he said. "Botecour? Englishman, isn't he? I remember him. Lady seems to have a wide circle of acquaintances in the armed forces of the United States. What was the message?"

I felt uncomfortable, but I did not want to get caught lying. So I told him:

"That she had left her home in the country and was with her Uncle Boyd at the Pillars, sir."

The Captain grunted. "Humph—Boyd at the Pillars." He made a note on a piece of paper. "Nice to know the home address of so charming a lady. Was there more to the message?"

I said, reluctantly: "Yes sir. She said she would be glad to get a word from him and hoped to see him there."

"What?" The Captain's tone combined amusement and incredulity. "Does she expect the gallant Major to ride into Richmond and call on her?"

"No sir; she said she meant later."

"I see," he commented. "When this cruel war is over. Did you gather that her heart is involved, or is she merely pulling a Yankee staff man's leg?"

"I don't know, sir," I told him.

He surveyed me with a speculative twinkle in his eyes, and was so deliberate about it that I began to get nervous.

"You are a stalwart lad, Dale," he said finally. "Are you quite sure you're not letting a pair of Virginia eyes befool you?"

"There aint any woman can make a fool of me, sir," I burst out.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I remember; you told me." He leaned back and looked at me with a faintly quizzical expression. "I am half inclined to believe you," he said at length. Then, sharply: "How old are you, Dale?"

"Twenty, sir."

"Humph! I'll take your word for it." Suddenly his manner became serious. He leaned forward, speaking slowly: "Dale," he said, "you are a most accomplished liar." The sudden leap of my heart almost cut off my breath. I could feel the sword descending upon me. "But," he went on, "in this case it just happens that no harm is done. Fortunately for you, we have reason to believe that it is due to nothing worse than a native impulse for reticence—an admirable quality when not applied in the wrong place."

He became, suddenly, brisk and businesslike. "You will deliver the message to Major Botecour, but be extremely careful not to let him know that it has been sifted through this office. These Britishers are touchy, and the State Department does not like to have them rubbed the wrong way. As regards all other details of this day, I earnestly suggest that you will never find a more fertile field for the exercise of your magnificent reticence."

He finished with a touch of sternness. I stood crestfallen and bewildered, while he scribbled a pass for the railroad. When he handed it to me, there was, once more, the ghost of a twinkle in his tired eyes. When I looked back from the doorway, he was hard at work again, his face hidden by his black hat-brim. I wondered when he did his sleeping. A kindly gentleman, I thought, but not always easy to understand.

IT was past noon, next day, before I got through the infantry lines and reported to Dr. Dowden at the Hospital. He seemed less mellow than usual.

"I was beginning to think they had shot you at sunrise. What transpired at the inquisition?"

"They wanted me to identify a horse, sir."

"Identify a horse!" he roared. "Hell and goddam! They shoot my paperwork all to hell, to identify a horse! It must be an important horse."

I said: "It's Stump Parsons' horse, sir. Stump was killed carrying dispatches, last summer—shot from ambush."

"Oh, yes," he said, more calmly but still with a puzzled expression. "I remember you told me. But hell and thanksgiving! If they're going to wreck a division hospital every time a horse-marine gets shot! They didn't say anything about me—about the hospital?"

I realized that he might have been worrying about his drinking—or looseness of tongue; so I hastened to set him at ease.

"Well," he said, "you've got a load of work to catch up with. I'd like to toast your hair's-breadth escape. . . . I don't suppose the frowsy gendarmes taught you to drink, did they?"

He was his mellow self again. I said, "No sir," and went to my office.

MY desk was a snowdrift of papers. I had barely started on them when Major Botecour rode up. To my amazement, he came to my room. I snapped to attention.

"At ease!" he barked. "Aren't you the young man I saw at the Olyphant plantation, last summer? Dale, is it?"

I said, "Yes sir." I wondered how he had all of a sudden remembered me.

"I've often wondered what happened to you that night, Dale. You got away without trouble, eh? No bushwhackers?"

I looked him straight in the eye. "No sir," I said, "I didn't have any trouble."

"You were fortunate," he said carelessly. "I congratulate you. . . . I am very glad."

I said: "I thank the Major."

This plainly was not what he had come to talk about, but he didn't seem to know how to get on. These Englishmen, I thought, aren't quick and funny like Doctor Dowden and Happy and Captain White. Major Botecour was as stiff and solemn as though he were sitting on a court-martial. Finally he said:

"I understood you had been called up by the provost marshal. I trust you are not in trouble?"

It struck me that his new interest in me was certainly thoroughgoing. I said:

"No sir. They wanted me to identify a horse."

"Identify a horse!"

"Yes sir," I said. "They found Stump Parsons' horse. Stump was shot from ambush, that afternoon, right near Mrs. Olyphant's. And now they've found his horse—the one he was riding."

HE frowned, as though trying to remember.

"Oh. . . . Yes, yes," he said, "I recall you spoke of it—some one spoke of it. The chap was your friend—dug his grave with your hands. . . . Yes, yes, I recall it struck me as a most pitiful affair. I am sorry, Dale. . . . And they called you to City Point to identify his horse—most unusual, what?"

"Yes sir, unusual," I said. "Stump couldn't have been shot by Reb soldiers or by bushwhackers, either, because he wasn't robbed—except the dispatches, I mean. So it was really murder."

The Major's face expressed polite astonishment. "Really?" he said. "Clever chaps, these provost guards—and persistent, eh? I was wondering, Dale—speaking of the Olyphants reminded me: There was a rumor at headquarters that Miss Olyphant—I think some one said he thought he had seen her at City Point. That seems incredible. . . . You didn't see her there, or hear about her?"

I had her message to give him, so I had to tell him the truth. "Yes sir," I told him, "I saw her there. She was riding that horse of Stump Parsons—"

"Riding your friend's horse?" He seemed genuinely taken aback. "How extraordinary!" He squinted his British eyes in an effort to figure it out. "After all," he continued, "not extraordinary, really. No doubt they found the animal on the plantation." He was apparently defending Virginia. I nodded and waited. "But—er—are they holding Miss Olyphant in arrest?"

"No sir; they sent her back to the Reb lines."

"Splendid!" He seemed vastly relieved. "Quite unspeakable to think of Miss Olyphant in a military prison—beastly for a lady. . . . You talked with her? Did she speak of me?"

"Yes sir," I said. "She asked me to tell the Major that she had left the plantation, and would be quite safe with her Uncle Boyd at the Pillars. She said she would be glad to get a word from the Major, and hoped to see him there—later, of course, she said."

He stood with his eyes squinted and his mouth open a little. When one of these Limeys tries to think, it breaks out all over his face. After a while he seemed to get it. He laughed in that English fashion that sounds as though it hurt. "Haw, haw, haw!" he bellowed. "'Later!' Really, you know, that is good—haw, haw, haw! Rather a good bit 'later,' I fancy."

He drew a deep breath as though the effort of expressing amusement had exhausted him. He went on: "Tremendous relief to know the ladies are not alone on that plantation—not safe, really. Arrant rebels, of course, but charming. . . . This Uncle Boyd lives in Richmond—Mrs. Olyphant's brother, I think?"

I had no information to offer.

"Well, Dale," Major Botecour said, "you have placed me under obligation. If I can help you, in any way, I trust you will permit me to do so. And I am truly sorry about your friend."

"I thank the Major," I said, and added grimly: "All I ask is to find the man who killed him."

"My word!" he exclaimed. "You Americans are so violent—vengeful." He seemed really shocked. "After all, Dale, many men on both sides are losing their dearest friends. . . . Fortune of war, you know."

"War! This was murder, sir."

His shoulders moved faintly as though he deprecated my low impulses. "You must call on me if I can be of service," he said.

I said, "I thank the Major," and he spun on his heel and strode away to Dr. Dowden's room.

IT was several weeks later that I looked up from my work, one day, and saw Happy Singleton striding past my door. It was a frightful shock, like seeing a ghost, for I had thought of him as certainly in prison and perhaps dead. He went to Dr. Dowden's room, and presently I began to hear the midriff rumblings of the Doctor's laugh, sure indication of a congenial drinking bout.

My work suffered while I tried to solve the enigma of Happy's presence. I was still at it, an hour or two later, when he emerged and lurched unsteadily up the hall. He peered in at me, grinning, his freckled face flushed, his eyes dull and sandy hair cascading in disorder from under his tilted forage cap.

"Ah—*hic*—my Alan-a-Dale," he cried. "Hurroo! This demands a drink!"

He proffered a canteen of whisky, the Doctor's accustomed gift to such departing guests as would accept it. I shook my head. He half-raised it to his own lips, then lowered it with a humorous grimace. "No more—*hic*—room," he grinned. He threw a leg over the corner of my table, and thus steadied, leered down at me.

"THE good Doctor Dowden," he gurgled, "apparently has unlimited supplies of the nectar that cheers and—*hic*—inebriates—and is generous with it. Where does he get it?"

I told him everyone seemed to be able to get all he wanted.

Happy said, "Alas, alas!" and wagged his head, disapprovingly. "And where gets he the military information he so freely dispenses with his—*hic*—nectar? Is he in the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief?"

I said the Doctor had many friends at different headquarters. "He was a pretty famous surgeon, once."

"Alas, alas!" Happy said again, but this time with more than a touch of seriousness. "Behold how J. Barleycorn doth lay low the best of—*hic*—the best of me—I mean, us." He pounded his chest, inducing a chain of hiccoughs. Emerging with a purple face, he smiled somewhat sheepishly.

"You see," he said, "beware the Demon Rum! But the Doctor, now," he went on with drunken persistence, "is his information authentic, or has he just been wasting my priceless time? I mean —*hic*—would Robert E. Lee be justified in basing his—*hic*—strategy on it?"

That was a startling thought. Some of Doctor Dowden's information was, for a fact, strikingly accurate, but just as often, it was a thousand miles wrong. I said:

"He never gives information to General Lee."

"Ah-h-h—" Happy wagged a finger in my face. "And how can you be sure? Marse Robert—*hic*—he has ten thousand ears—and how you going to recognize them, Sir Rosycheeks?" By some trick of the scalp muscles he waggled his own ears. "I demand to know, sir—how you be sure even these vast appendages which wave before your eyes are not in the service of the Great Commander?"

I felt uncomfortable. I did not want Doctor Dowden to get into trouble, and if Happy Singleton was really a Secesh spy, I did not want him confessing it to me when his brain was fogged with whisky, either. I could not help liking him, and spies were none of my business —the newspapers told everything, anyway.

"What the Doctor says when he's drunk doesn't mean anything," I said. "He likes to talk big."

Happy studied my face with drunken intentness. "All right, I'll tell Marse Robert not to take Doc's word for it."

He stood up, but reeled and was forced to steady himself by the table, pressing his eyes shut and opening them with a shake of the head. "Gor," he groaned, "the good Doctor's hospitality is durable stuff. And me with seven—*hic*—miles of Johnny Parke's pickets to ride, God help me!"

"You'd better ditch that whisky, then," I warned him.

He hugged the canteen with mock terror. "No—*hic*—no!" he protested. "Days of surcease from miserable thoughts! . . . See you when I come for more."

He lurched out, and I saw him swing into the saddle with what, in the circumstances, seemed remarkable precision, and ride away toward City Point. . . .

In the next month Happy seemed to require fresh supplies of surcease about every four or five days. He was always full drunk when he departed but he never again did more than wave a hand at me. Several times his path crossed Major Botecour's, but they never remained together. Disparity of rank would have been sufficient reason, but beyond this, I was certain each knew and disliked the other though without being aware the other recognized him.

WHEN the rains let up, in middle March, and roads gave premonitory signs of drying out, the Army atmosphere became electric with speculation regarding Grant's next move—the final move of the war, we all believed. The predominant opinion was that he would resume the extension of his lines west and north until he cut the railroads and thus forced Lee either to abandon Richmond or surrender. But Doctor Dowden took the other view. I heard him arguing it, heatedly, with Major Botecour.

"But my dear Major," he said with the pontifical manner which descended upon him in such moments, "Grant has tried that and it doesn't work. He hasn't men enough to stretch the lines to

"I understand — too well, Ginny," Happy said. "I've not blamed you for worming information out of that imitation Englishman. But to entertain him here—"

the railroad. Grant will make Lee think that is what he intends to do but I have it on the very best authority that we are really going to shift to the right and attack Richmond. "

I could hear Major Botecour rallying the Doctor, good-naturedly, and the latter insisting with alcoholic vehemence.

"You wait," he asserted. "Sheridan will be back in a few days and then you see what happens!"

The Major rose and moved to the door. "In that case," he laughed, "I must hurry back to the Corps and begin work on the marching orders. We will dine together in Richmond."

THE next afternoon I rode over to my regiment to investigate a rumor that the paymaster had arrived, after six months of false alarms. It was pitch dark when I returned and put my horse into the hospital corral. I picked my way up through the old slave quarters and, as I was edging cautiously along the last of the cabins, I heard low voices around the corner. Major Botecour's crisp, British drawl said:

"Fifteen dollars, gold, is a considerable amount of money, Corporal."

"Yes sir," the other voice replied, "fifteen dollars, gold, is a right smart heap of money up here where the Yankee pickets are thick. But that country down around Dinwiddie is plumb full of Fitz Lee's cuirassiers, Major, and they don't like Yankee corporals, for sour apples. If I go to hell, I'll need at least a hundred, gold, and that's $153, greenbacks, right now."

The voice was Happy Singleton's soft whisky drawl, with the hint of Secesh that sometimes crept into it to betray his Virginia strain.

I was too dumfounded to move, even if I had dared risk discovery.

After some hesitation, the Major said, "Very well." He did not sound pleased —$153 was a great deal of money. He went on: "This girl lives just off the Vaughan Road, half a mile or so beyond the Quaker Road . . . you know that country?"

Happy said: "No sir; I've been up on the right wing."

"Well!" The Major seemed irritated and at a loss. "Well," he resumed after some thought, "there is a clerk here named . . . Dale, I think. He might be able to guide you—"

"Dale?" Happy questioned. "Oh, yes; I recollect. But he's only a boy, Major."

All this made it clear that, whatever might be in the wind, these two did not have an understanding. I felt relieved.

"He isn't topheavy with brains," the Major conceded, "but he is intelligent enough, and he must have been down that way with his division. No doubt he would jump at the chance to guide you for ten dollars."

Happy said smoothly: "The boy supports a mother and three brothers, Major. Even fifty dollars would be small enough consolation for them if he gets a chunk of Rebel lead in his belly."

One of the curious things about Happy Singleton was that he talked to officers exactly as he talked to me. After a moment the Major agreed grumpily: "All right; we will talk to him."

I stole away then, and made for the house at a run. I had barely recovered my breath when they arrived. I did, quite sincerely, jump at the offer. Fifty dollars would be a godsend at home. Besides, I was curious to get an answer to this puzzle and, beneath it all, the odors of spring had filled me with a craving for action. The Major asked me if I could find Chapel Road and I told him, yes.

"This house," he said, "is just off the Vaughan Road. You will know it by three white posts, close to the highway. Are you sure you know the way?"

"Yes sir," I said with some disdain. "It's straight down the Vaughan Road—"

"My good man," the Major broke in, almost angrily, "our left is along the Vaughan Road. They would not let you through."

"You could get us passes," Happy suggested.

"My good man," the Major turned on Happy with irritation, "one does not publish matters of this sort to the army."

I could quite understand that and I marveled that Happy had not grasped it. The women that soldiers visited, outside the lines, were not the sort to be spoken of publicly. I was shocked and disgusted that a man who had kissed Virginia Olyphant should be having traffic with one of them. I was amazed that he should confide in two enlisted men who were acquainted with Virginia —especially Happy who, he must know, was a close friend, if nothing more.

"Well sir," I said, "we'll have to go down the Jerusalem Road, then, and across through the woods—fifteen or twenty miles—maybe forty, if we have to dodge the Johnnies."

"You are being well paid," the Major growled, and asked if I knew the roads,

that way. I told him I did. I had been that way half a dozen times with the regiment and the hospital.

"Very well," he said. "You must wait until after dark and there will be no light showing. Knock like this—"

He tapped it out on the table with his knuckles: *one—one-two—one-two-three,* and then reversed it: *three—two—one.*

"Repeat that until you are admitted. Ask for 'Ann' and deliver my message to her. . . . Is it clear?"

"Yes sir," Happy said. "Perhaps," he added, "you had better make two copies of the note—"

The Major broke in angrily: "There is to be no writing. . . . Can't you understand? The message is this:

"'The Earl regrets that he cannot keep his appointment. He expects friends from the North. He will have to take them to the James River region and may be detained indefinitely.'"

He made us both memorize it. Then he said: "Report back to me, and I will pay you."

"It would be better if you paid us now, sir," Happy said. "There is no currency-exchange across the Styx. . . . And Dale may want to send his home before we start."

After some hesitation Major Botecour reluctantly counted out $153 to Happy and fifty dollars to me. As he turned away, he essayed a bit of playfulness, leering expressively at Happy.

"You boys must not yield to temptation. She is a lovely little piece—but remember, she is mine."

Happy stared after him with an expression of disgust. "A very proper so-and-so," he grated. "Two hundred dollars to send apologies to an army light-o'-love. These English johnnies are damn' scrupulous—in some things. . . . . We must start by noon."

I had opened my mouth to say "all right," when I sustained the worst shock I had had since I stumbled on the body of Stump Parsons in the dust of the Chilesburg road. For Happy, quite casually, drew from his pocket Stump's notecase—the pigskin folder, with the gold initials, *"F. L. P."*—which I was certain had been taken from Stump's body by the man who killed him.

Happy was plainly puzzled by the sudden consternation in my face. Then, with abrupt understanding, he thrust the greenbacks into the notecase with fumbling haste and returned it to his pocket. I had never seen him betray such utter confusion. At length he said, with a futile pretense of lightness, "Well, pleasant dreams," and hurried out.

I had very little sleep that night. My life had collapsed in fragments that could only be patched together in a different form. First, Stump had gone. Now Happy Singleton, who might have been a second friend to me, seemed to stand revealed as the man who had killed Stump—if possession of that notecase meant what it seemed to mean.

I spent hours trying to decide what to do. My impulse was to confront Happy with the straightforward charge. But he would ridicule it and I should be no match for him in the contest of wits which must follow. Certainly I could not shoot him on evidence which, however cogent it might seem, still left the possibility of a doubt. Besides, we had assumed a joint obligation and it must be discharged. I determined, finally, to say nothing until it was discharged. Then I would compel an answer.

WHEN we started, next forenoon, Happy essayed to bring our relations back to their old standing.

"Having no passes," he observed, "we shall have to rely on my charm of manner and this canteen of whisky. They rarely fail."

I could not respond, in kind, and I did not try. Fortunately Happy's talismans did not fail us and our progress was easy enough. But when we turned off the well-traveled Jerusalem Road and I found myself alone with him in the woods, it came to me sharply that if he had this burden of guilt on his soul my own situation was not without peril. I began to edge back until I was half a length behind him. I thought I had been clever about it, but presently he turned his head and said, with a wry smile:

"You make me feel like a major-general. Don't stand on ceremony, my man; close up and let us face the enemy in company-front."

IT was lightly spoken, but I thought there was meaning behind it. I drew abreast and we rode on, saying nothing but keeping a furtive eye on one another. We crossed the Weldon railroad well above Reams' Station, having no wish to meet pickets of either army. But at the Monk's Neck crossing of the creek, beyond, we were fired on. We cut back diagonally through the woods to the railroad below the Station.

Following the line south we turned into the Malone's Bridge road. We still were heading more south than west and, after a time, Happy pulled up, squinting significantly at the descending sun, now well to our right. His expression belied the lightness of his words.

"Thomas," he said, "you aren't, by any chance, taking me south to join Uncle Billy Sherman—or for any other purpose? We must be farther south than Dinwiddie, already."

"We are," I told him, shortly. "And we may have to go a damn' sight farther before we get around the Rebs—if we ever do."

He studied my face, then said, with a rasp in his voice:

"All right. But don't act on impulses till you're sure what you're doing."

We found the Malone crossing unguarded but the creek was bank-full with a sluggish yellow flood. We had to strip and swim with our clothes strapped to the horses' heads and our arms held above water as best we could. We emerged with chattering teeth. We wiped and snapped carbines and pistols dry, and reloaded, watching each other and moving with equal steps, like two men playing a matched game.

"I suppose," Happy stuttered, "it wouldn't be safe to build a fire?"

It was almost dark. I said, "A good way to call the Johnnies, if you want them."

He grunted, "Humph!" and we began to put on our clothes. Once he stopped to sop water from his saddle with his jacket. "These saddles'll be plenty hard and stiff when they're dry again," he growled. Damn the Quartermaster General! And rusty sabers to shine!" He sounded spontaneously ugly, and I had never heard him like that, before.

We walked beside the horses until our blood was moving, again. We were still edging south of west and, from time to time, I could see Happy studying the stars. Presently I turned north, and our route, thereafter, was steadily north and west. Happy gradually ceased to study the heavens and rode slumped down in his saddle. But we held our carbines ready across our thighs and our ears were tensed for sounds ahead or in the thickets which hedged the road. I was certain, too, that Happy watched me, through the darkness, as closely as I watched him.

Suddenly he pulled up, startling me so that I brought my carbine up. He drew close and whispered, "You're sure you know where we are?"

I said, "Yes," and watched him.

"Where?" he demanded.

"Cattail Run ought to be about a mile ahead—Big Cattail. The Vaughan Road is a couple of miles beyond that," I told him. "Then we're almost there—if the Johnnies don't stop us at the Cattail Run."

HE seemed only half satisfied, but pushed on. When we came to the run, however, and had crossed without trouble, his manner changed. After a while he said:

"Tom, you must have a brain like a map. Ought to apply for a headquarters detail."

I said, fervently: "Not by a damn' sight." I had carried orders for General Davies at the Yellow Tavern and been glad to get back to the safety of the firing-line. But the change in Happy's manner had relaxed the tension, though only a little.

"I've been over some of this a dozen times, at night," I told him. "Plenty of landmarks if—"

At that instant a voice ahead bellowed: "Who goes there?"

It sounded Secesh, and curiously, the first thought of my shaken mind was that this would be the time for Happy to unmask himself and get rid of me. Instantly I heard the rasping whirr of his saber as he jerked it from the scabbard. He rose in his stirrups, shouted, "Squadron . . . Sabers . . . Charge!" and drove spurs into his horse.

I spurred mine, also, and he leaped forward, so suddenly that I had to fall ignominiously upon his neck to avoid being unseated. There were shouts of "Halt!" a spattering of shots—not more than three or four—and I caught a blurred glimpse of men in the road. I saw Happy lash at one with his saber and the man went down. My horse shouldered another and sent him plunging into the brush. There was a solitary shot from behind us; then silence. We galloped on for half a mile before Happy pulled up.

"Hit?" he panted.

"No. You?"

"No."

FOR a minute we sat breathing hard, straining our ears. Happy dismounted and put his ear to the ground. He straightened up with his old-time chuckle.

"No pursuit," he said. "They had horses, too. Simple souls, these troopers—must have accepted my statement that we're a squadron. Johnnies or Yanks?"

"Sounded like Johnnies," I said.

"You couldn't tell," he rejoined. "I thought the chap I hit had a blue uniform. But that wouldn't prove anything."

"Well," I said, "if we killed those two, I hope they were Johnnies."

"On secret service," he said, carelessly, "friends can sometimes do you more harm than enemies. You can't be squeamish."

Excitement and the bond of common danger had drawn me to him, for the moment. But the callousness of that remark chilled me and broke the spell. No squeamishness, I thought, restrained the man who shot Stump Parsons from behind a bush or, worse, from the ambush of his own Federal uniform. Then, suddenly, I wondered what his reference to "secret service" might signify. Certainly this mission was private business of the most disreputable sort—scarcely fit to justify the killing of enemies, let alone friends. And I longed to ask just which was which in his mind when he spoke of friends and enemies.

Abruptly, Happy asked, "If we had come by Monk's Neck, the way we started, would we have run into those fellows?"

"Yes," I said shortly, "they were right where that road comes in."

"I wish I knew who put them there. . . . Quiet, now!"

Our horses made little noise in the soft clay but it seemed to me that the occasional clank of equipment must be audible in Petersburg. The harder I tried to listen the louder the blood roared in my ears to deafen me. I saw a Reb in almost every bush. When, finally, we turned down the Vaughan Road toward Dinwiddie, I breathed more easily. Any Reb posts would be up toward Petersburg; any we might find, down this way, would be marching and we should hear them.

Some distance beyond the junction of the Quaker Road my horse suddenly lifted his head and whickered. I raised my carbine and cocked my ears but before I could speak or act Happy reached over and dug his fingers harshly into my arm. We rode so for a time. Then he let his hand drop and, leaning close, whispered:

"There were men in the woods, there —and horses; didn't you hear them?"

"No," I said, "but they must have heard this fool horse."

"They heard us," he said significantly, "but they let us pass."

I was still trying to make out what he meant when we reached the next corner. I whispered, "This is Chapel Road," and we turned into it.

WE had no difficulty in seeing the three white posts. They stood by the roadside like luminous ghosts—three freshly whitewashed fence posts. There was a lane, grass-grown but discernible. We followed it through the field until we sighted the shadowy mass of a house. We tied the horses in a clump of scrub oak.

"Not too tight," Happy warned. "We may want to leave in a hurry."

The house was a modest one and the gallery sagged ruinously. There was no sign of light. I held my carbine ready while Happy tapped out the signal-knock. He had raised his hand to repeat it when a woman's muffled voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"From the Earl," Happy replied, in a stage whisper.

There was the sound of a bolt and the door swung open. Virginia Olyphant stood there, holding a candle high and poising a revolver. I felt Happy recoil against me. Virginia's eyes widened and she caught her breath with an audible gasp. She cried, "Lee!" as though she could not believe it. The revolver and the candle clattered to the floor, leaving us in darkness. Happy said, in a thinly even voice:

"Take us where there is a light, Ginny."

THE room to which Virginia Olyphant led us, down the dark hall, was a dismantled place, damp, with the odor of desertion about it. It was lighted by one candle on a pine table. For the rest, a broken chair and a camp bed, neatly made up with army blankets. There were a few toilet articles and a piece of mirror on the table. The windows were tightly blinded with strips of carpet. It was the makeshift bedroom of a woman. Virginia, for the first time in my experience of her, wore woman's clothes. Her masculine garb lay, folded, across the foot of the cot.

The stricken, incredulous look remained on the girl's face. Her whole attitude expressed a sort of hopeless bewilderment. Once she lifted her hands, uncertainly, and swayed a little toward Happy, as though she would grasp his arms. He repulsed her with a quick, nervous gesture of the hand that was like a blow. His expression was taut and his eyes were cold and hard as ice. The silence and the tension were becoming almost intolerable. It was Virginia who broke them.

"Lee!" she pleaded faintly.

He silenced her with another movement of his hand. "You are 'Ann'?" he asked in a toneless voice.

She bowed her head in assent.

"'The Earl'"—he gave the title a scornful twist—"regrets that he cannot keep his—"

Happy paused and then, putting deliberate, brutal emphasis on the interpolated word, went on "—his *assignation*—"

She uttered a pitiful, "Oh!" of protest and again extended her hands in a pleading gesture. He waved her away and continued:

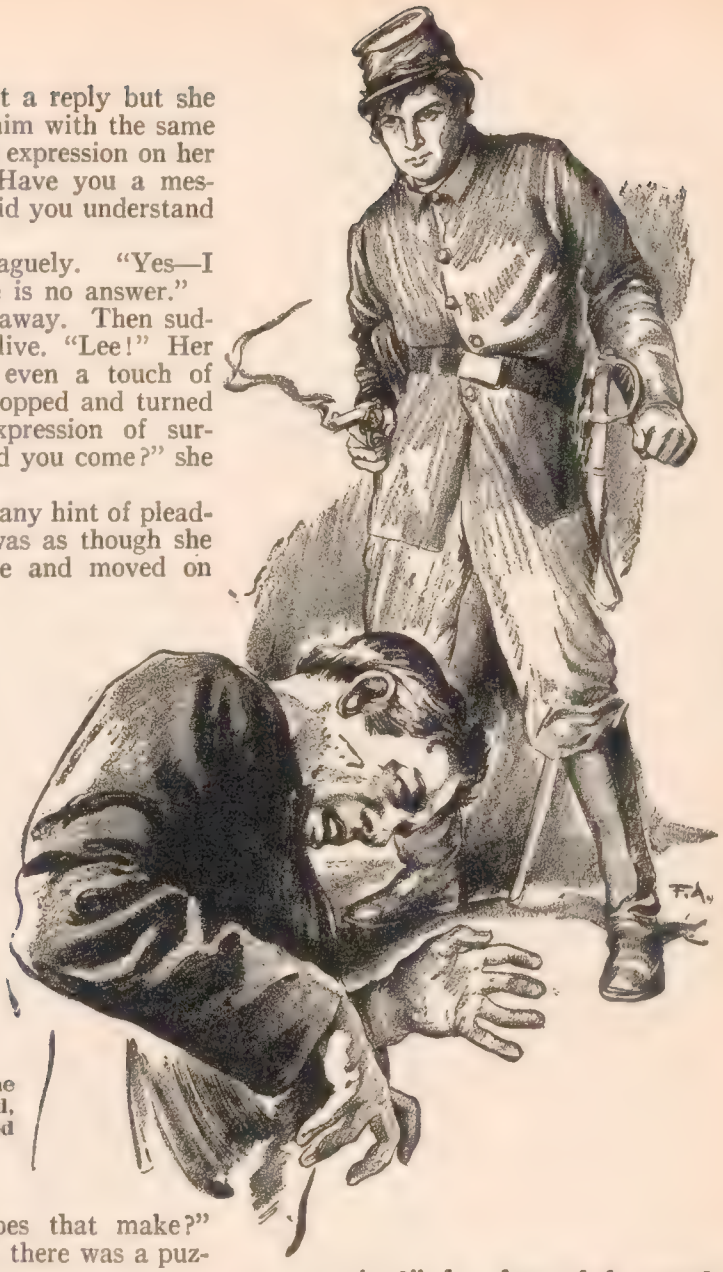
"He expects friends from the North. He will have to take them to the James River region and may be detained indefinitely."

He seemed to expect a reply but she continued to stare at him with the same dull, uncomprehending expression on her face. He snapped: "Have you a message to send back? Did you understand what I told you?"

"Oh," she said, vaguely. "Yes—I understand. . . . There is no answer."

He turned abruptly away. Then suddenly Virginia came alive. "Lee!" Her voice was firm, with even a touch of command in it. He stopped and turned his head, with an expression of surprise. "Which way did you come?" she demanded.

There was no longer any hint of pleading in her voice. It was as though she accepted the inevitable and moved on to other things.



Suddenly I sensed the man's intent. I yelled, "Look out!" and fired from the hip.

"What difference does that make?" His tone was harsh but there was a puzzled note in it.

"You came by the south, didn't you?" she insisted. "You must not go back that way. Go by the Boydton Road."

Happy laughed unpleasantly. "The Boydton Road is a notorious Confederate thoroughfare. Do you really think it would be healthier for us?"

She answered firmly: "Yes. They are waiting for you on the other road. They are going to shoot you as you go back."

For an instant we were speechless. Happy was first to grasp her meaning.

"Oh, I see," he jeered. "I heard them in the woods, back at the corner. We wondered what they were waiting for—"

Suddenly he stepped forward and gripped her arms so harshly that she cringed with pain. "Did you know I was coming?" he demanded, tensely. "Ginny! Did you know it was I he was going to send?"

She said evenly, "You know I didn't, Lee."

"Yes," he answered, slowly, "I can believe that."

Again he turned away but she cried, "Wait!" She was plainly struggling with a decision. "Lee, I am going to tell you the password for tonight—"

She hesitated and I could recognize the desperation which would make her reveal the Confederate password to her enemies. But Happy gave a short laugh.

"I will save you from treason," he said sardonically. "The word is 'Mahone' and a very neat death-sentence for any man in Federal uniform. Good-by."

This time she grasped him by the arms and swung him to face her.

"Lee," she cried, "you have got to listen. You have got to understand—"

He shook her off and his voice, when he spoke, was harsher than I had ever heard it—low and even but bitter.

"I do understand," he said. "I understand too damned well, Ginny. I haven't blamed you for doing spy work for the Cause. . . . I've honored you for it. I haven't blamed you for worming information out of that imitation Englishman—this renegade. I haven't blamed you for letting him kiss you—" Her head snapped up, and I heard her gasp. "Yes," he snarled, "I saw you." His voice was thickening as his anger rose. "I wouldn't even have blamed you if you had married him. But"—he paused and his eyes swept the room with an expressive glance and stopped, significantly, at the cot—"to entertain him, here, like a common army woman—"

I took one step forward and slapped his face. The impulse to do it had been growing on me, intolerably, from the moment when I began to understand what all this was about. He turned to stare at me. Slowly his face changed; the anger gave way to an expression in which shame, astonishment and unutterable joy were most absurdly mingled. He turned to Virginia. She regarded him tranquilly but there was a hint of challenge in the proud poise of her head. Suddenly he stretched out his arms and drew her to him. I went out and closed the door behind me.

IT seemed an hour but could have been only a few minutes before Happy rejoined me. He put an arm around my shoulders as we picked our way up the black hall. Outside, he whispered, "Sir Rosycheeks, I misdoubt that Major-scum underestimated your brains. Or is it just instinct?"

There was a lilt in his voice and I heard him humming the "Jubilo" tune as we unhitched the horses. In the saddle, he became alert and brisk, again. To avoid the ambuscade, behind us, we went on toward the Boydton Road, however great its risks. At a safe distance from the house we stopped in the woods to feed our weary horses. As we munched our own rations I said:

"Why should the Rebs be ambushing us?"

"Love and war are brutal games," he responded sourly. "Dead men neither marry nor return to tell embarrassing tales."

That, I found, did not help me much. The "love" part was fairly clear. Major Botecour had sent his rival to taste the bitterness of Virginia's supposed unfaithfulness and then to die and be out of the way. And if the Major really were a Secesh spy he might feel safer with me out of the way. To me it all seemed incredibly brutal and ruthless.

BUT I did not care, now, about that. The question that nagged my mind was: what had happened to re-establish Happy Singleton with Virginia Olyphant? Her detestation of him as a "renegade" had seemed too deep, too intense to be easily overcome. Had tonight's events, the revelation of the Major's treachery, Happy's desperate peril, softened her? Or had Happy somehow revealed to her that he, too, was loyal to the Cause she cherished? I could not see the light—and I was afraid.

Happy said, abruptly:

"'Uncle Boyd' of the Boydton Road. And those three white posts, I suppose, are the pillars. Too bad you didn't tell me about that. . . . I might have figured it out. . . . No; better as it is."

I said absently, "Yes"—then caught my breath sharply. If I hadn't told him—and I was sure I hadn't—then who had? Here was fresh bewilderment and dread. Happy had been near the plantation when Stump Parsons was killed and I believed, with increasing certainty, that Virginia had known he was there. He had Stump's notecase. He had the Confederate password. And now he had let slip that he knew the key to Virginia's rendezvous, "Uncle Boyd at 'the Pillars'"—even though ignorant of her presence.

Happy, however, seemed blissfully unaware that he had made a slip. He hummed gayly, under his breath:

It mus' be now my kingdom comin',
An' my yar ob jubilo.

Presently we mounted and rode on to the Boydton Road. We had gone some distance northward when a voice, almost under our noses, shouted:

"Halt!"

It was a rich, unmistakable Secesh voice. Hammers clicked, all around us.

"'Mahone,'" Happy snapped. "Don't shoot!"

The voice called for a light and presently a pine-knot flared, revealing a

dozen infantrymen in tattered butternut and a boyish lieutenant who seemed to feel both important and nervous. The sight of our blue uniforms appeared to surprise and disconcert him.

"Wha-ar yo'-uns goin'?" he demanded uncertainly.

Abruptly Happy snatched my pistol from the holster and thrust it against my ribs.

"Raise your hands, Yank," he snapped. "Steady, boys!"

It was a recognizable voice of command and the Johnnies stood frozen. Dumfounded, I raised my hands. As I released my carbine Happy caught it and laid it with his own.

"Keep the Yank covered," he ordered.

He looked down at the astonished lieutenant with an expression of whimsical exasperation. He said, in his best Virginia drawl:

"Answering your question, Lieutenant, I was going into the Yankee lines on important business . . . but you and God seem to have disposed differently. I am Colonel Chester, of C. S. Secret Service. I presume you will want me to prove it."

HE drew out a penknife and cut the stitches of a small leather patch on his bridle rein. From this pocket he produced a compactly folded paper and handed it to the lieutenant. It was, in fact, the credential of Colonel Randolph Chester, Confederate States Army. The lieutenant stammered crestfallen apologies but Happy brusquely cut them short.

"You have done your exact duty, sir. Not your fault if my designs are muddled, thereby." He glowered speculatively at me. "I was planning to ride into the Yankee lines with an accredited Yankee orderly. Now I have him on my hands."

"Reckon we-all kin take ca-ah 'f him, Cun'l Chesteh, seh," the lieutenant suggested.

The way those Johnnies licked their chops fairly turned me cold. I spent an unhappy minute while Happy—or Colonel Chester—seemed to weigh the proposal seriously. Finally he shook his head.

"I may find a way to use him. Ride on, Yank, and no monkey business!"

He rode close behind me for half a mile, then called to me to halt. He listened for a moment, then chuckled.

"Well, my Alan-a-Dale," he queried, "what are you making of all this?"

"Nothing," I said, resentfully.

He chuckled again. "No doubt time will bring the answer."

To my amazement he returned my weapons. Certainly, I thought as we rode on, he would not do that if he intended me any harm. And certainly he would not be taking me into the Union lines where I could get him hanged if he were a spy. But it failed to reassure me. Added to everything else there was now the indubitable evidence of a commission in the Rebel army. And I had had experience enough of his resourcefulness and effrontery to convince me that he would attempt anything. I suddenly decided that I had been led blind, long enough. I had earned my fifty dollars. It was time to seek an answer to the question of Stump Parsons. I raised my carbine.

"Halt!" I commanded. "I've got you covered."

He pulled up and turned toward me. "I see you have," he said. "So why?"

"I want to know who you are," I informed him, "and what you are."

"Well-l-l," he drawled, and paused. There was a teasing undertone that angered me but, at the same time, made me uncomfortably conscious of my youth and unsophistication. "Well," he said, I have no doubt many share your curiosity. My mother always called me 'Lee Garnett' and back in York State, where I was born and raised, I vote under that name. In the armed forces of the United States I am, as you know, quite commonly known as 'Happy Singleton', the merry dipsomaniac." It flashed into my mind, incongruously, that he had not taken a drink since we left camp, though he had started with a canteen full The thought added nothing to my sense of security. "And down here," he went on, "you are a witness that I am accepted as Colonel Randolph Chester, C. S. A." He paused. "It is very puzzling," he said with mock solemnity. "Are there any other questions you would like me to answer?"

NOW I was completely demoralized. I could only blurt out, "I want to know what you are going to do with me!"

His tone became, suddenly, very serious and gentle. "Tommy," he said, "from all you know, do you think I'm likely to let you come to harm if I can prevent it?"

"No," I was forced to admit sullenly.

"Very well," he said, with crisp briskness. "Let us press our jaded steeds.

Daylight impends and Union lines are still afar off."

It was past breakfast when we reached the headquarters of the Blank Corps, having dodged three more patrols, presumably Rebel, and almost been killed by Union pickets. It took Happy some time to cut our way through the red-tape jungle to the door of Major Botecour's room. The orderly announced:

"Colonel Garnett to see Major Botecour, sir."

I CANNOT remember that I so much as blinked; I was too weary and too hungry for emotion of any sort. And I was too deeply inured to the endless metamorphoses of Happy Singleton—or whatever his name might be. It was otherwise with Major Botecour. As we entered he was rising from the table at which he had been writing. He bent forward, staring with rounded eyes, his mouth sagging open. Happy—or Colonel Garnett—said with smooth irony:

"Merely a pair of ghosts, Major—from Uncle Boyd's at the Pillars. . . . Don't touch that!" he snapped, as Major Botecour stiffened and moved his hand toward the pistol holster on his desk. Then Happy's manner became elaborately formal:

"Corporal Singleton and Private Dale beg to report delivery of Major Botecour's message to the lady, 'Ann.' They beg to report also that the officer commanding enemy detachment did everything in his power to carry out Major Botecour's orders for their destruction—"

The Major squared his shoulders and the blood surged back into his face.

"What is the meaning of this nonsense, Singleton?" he demanded. "Are you drunk?"

Dropping his ironical manner, Happy said, with straightforward crispness:

"For your information, Major, I am Colonel Lee Garnett, United States Army Secret Service." The Major's breathing quickened and I saw him furtively lick his lips. "At my direction," Happy went on, "Dr. Dowden conveyed to you certain wholly erroneous information regarding the campaign plans of the army. This information you transmitted to an enemy agent in the message which Dale and I carried, last night."

The Major swallowed hard. His control did him credit. "A very clever story," he sneered, "but as it happens my message was exactly what it purported to be—an explanation to the Olyphant girl of my inability to spend the night with her."

For an instant I thought Happy would kill him, then and there. The Major must have thought so too, for his hand jerked toward his pistol. I snatched mine from the holster but Happy checked us both with a motion of his hand. He was quivering and seemed unable to speak. The Major went on:

"A clever scheme to get me out of the way, Garnett, but I doubt if it will succeed." Then, as Happy remained silent, he burst out with nervous irritation: "Well, arrest me and get it over with. I'll make short work of you and your scheme."

Happy said, with slow emphasis: "It is no part of my duty to arrest spies—or murderers—"

"What do you mean by that!" Major Botecour blustered. "Murderer! My good man—"

He broke off with a choking sound and his face went deathly white. Happy was holding up Stump Parsons' notecase. "You recognize this?" he purred.

The Major fought to control himself but his voice was shaken when he responded.

"Are you sure you are not presenting evidence against the wrong person?" he asked. "You got that from Ginny."

"And she got it from you," Happy returned, in a solemn voice. "But she did not know, when you gave it to her, that you had obtained it by shooting a man who wore the same uniform that you do. That, sir," he said, with a sudden burst of violence, "was murder!"

For a time there was no sound but the swift breathing of three tense men. I stared fascinated. Here, at last, was the man who had killed Stump Parsons—and they would soon put him forever beyond my reach.

THE Major moistened his lips and swallowed hard. Finally he spoke, struggling to keep his voice steady:

"Whatever you are going to do, do it. I shall be glad to get this matter before a court where I can prove its absurdity . . . and your motive."

Happy drew a deep breath and passed a hand across his forehead. Then he said, with measured slowness:

"Your parents were Virginia gentlefolk. I am going to give you the chance to do what every gentleman's son should do when he faces hanging."

I tell you it is a terrible thing to see a human being condemned to self-destruction. As Major Botecour grasped the meaning of it the blood drained from his face and his body seemed to sag. The hunted, pleading look in his eyes was pitiable. Happy's eyes swung to the pistol on the table and he kept his glance fixed on it. Slowly the urgent suggestion took effect. The Major seemed to gather courage. His shoulders straightened and he looked levelly into the eyes which Happy raised to his. He fumbled for the pistol, drew it from its holster, half-raised it and paused with the butt against his ribs.

The weapon was pointing straight at Happy Singleton and suddenly I sensed the man's intent. I yelled, "Look out!" and fired at him from the hip.

The Major's shot seemed to make one report with mine—but mine had been first. His pistol jerked upward as my bullet struck him, and his shot went wild. He reeled, poised motionless an instant with a curious expression of bewilderment on his face. Then, half-turning, he crashed face-downward to the floor. Happy stared for a moment at the sprawling figure before he faced me with a twisted, mirthless smile.

"Thank you, my Alan-a-Dale," he said, not quite steadily. "From every point of view it was an admirable shot."

GOING away, late that afternoon, Happy rode silently, head down, as though crushed by a weight of unhappy thoughts. We were within a mile of the spot where I should turn off to the cavalry camp when he straightened up, with a gusty sigh, and turned his characteristic grin on me.

"Hence, loathed Melancholy," he observed. "Positively nothing has happened for which anyone alive need feel aught but joy."

He began to sing, under his breath:

De oberseer he make us trouble,
An' he dribe us roun' a spell,
We lock him up in de smoke-house cellar,
Wid de key flung in de well.
De whip am lost, de han'-cuff broke,
But de massa hab his pay;
He big an' ole enough for to know better
Dan to went an' run away—

"'De Majah hab his pay'," he said, somberly. "Let his name die with him . . . it is a highly-respected one in Virginia—but it isn't Botecour. He was thoroughly rotten—a scoundrel—and a coward. Virginia—the State, I mean—kicked him out, years ago—to England. God knows how he got into the Union Army but he's been selling information to the enemy—some of it deadly. But we've never caught him.

"I followed him up to Olyphant House. When I heard you tell about your friend I cornered Ginny—later—and made her give up the dispatches. And the notecase," he added, with a twinkle. "Almost got myself shot for that, didn't I? But we couldn't prove it on Botecour. Ginny would have sworn that she did it.

"That time up at City Point puzzled you, didn't it? When you saw me I was trying to persuade Captain White to let me send Ginny North to my folks—out of mischief. He was bound to turn her loose again as bait for Botecour. Hence my tearful manner—my notorious liaison with the Demon Rum was designed, first to test the motives of the good Doctor Dowden and, second, to convince Botecour of my complete irresponsibility. You see," he explained, "if I want to act drunk I have to be drunk. Apparently I didn't fool the Major, after all . . . but we got him, just the same."

WE pulled up at the parting of our ways. He said earnestly:

"Tommy, it was your quick brain and trigger-finger that has made it possible to keep Ginny's name out of all this . . . not to mention slapping my stupid face and saving my life and inspiring the lady to consent to make it glorious. The wedding won't be a proper wedding unless you are there."

"But," I floundered, "but—but Happy—I mean, the Colonel, sir—"

He threw back his head and laughed. "Happy, sir, is right," he said. "I never could take myself seriously as Colonel Garnett, sir . . . it just aint in me.—The lady says, no Trooper Dale, no wedding. So what can a gentleman do, Tommy?"

"I'll come," I said, faintly.

"Good!" He gave my hand a brief, firm pressure. "*Au r'voir*, my Alan-a-Dale. Guard yourself well."

He rode slowly off up the City Point road and his soft barytone floated back:

De Majah gone, ha, ha!
Ole Happy stay, ho, ho!
It mus' be now my kingdom comin',
An' my yar ob jubiloh-h-h-h.

THE END

Good Night to All

By H. BEDFORD-JONES and CAPTAIN

BILL JOYCE flipped the landing net expertly and eased the big pike into the boat, then hitched up his sweater and beamed.

"Four pounds if it's an ounce," said he. "That's the kind of a wall-eye to land! Now we've got a four-mile row home, so hop to it."

"And what'll you be doing?" I inquired sarcastically.

"Trolling," he said, "and talking. That's the best thing I do."

With a grunt, I put out the oars. Bill Joyce, broad and stocky, looked like a football player for all his grizzled hairs, and so he was. He did not look or act like a college professor, but he was that too, and a few things more. He must have read my mind, for he gave me a grin.

"Even a college professor may have something on the ball," he observed genially. "Ever hear of a Norwegian cat?"

"No, but I saw a Siamese in town yesterday."

He chuckled. "This is a ship, not a feline. Single mast well for'ard in the eyes of the boat, with a lugsail and bowlines; the craft itself double-ended like a Viking ship. Hasn't been in use for three hundred years or so, but did a great thing once. By the way, you write stories, and stories have got to deal with heroes, so you ought to be an expert. What's your notion of a hero, anyhow?"

I cocked a wary eye at Bill.

"Might be anyone or anything. Might be a little old woman who drags a man around by the hair; might be a stalwart buck with two guns and notches on 'em; might be an office clerk who slugs the cop on the corner—"

"Aw, lay off," struck in Bill. "I'm serious. What's your real idea of a hero?"

"Let's say, the soldier of fortune—sometimes. What's yours?"

"All right. I'd say, the feller who sets out to lick the world and who gets licked, and who knows he's licked and yet hangs on and keeps his chin up, and finally crawls out with the world by the tail."

"You sound like a football pep-talk."

"Football, hell!" grunted Bill Joyce, who runs to very unacademic language at times. "I was thinking," he went on, "of Cap'n Jens Munck."

"Never heard of the gent."

"You wouldn't, with your mind on movie heroes. This was a bird who licked everything there was to lick—world, flesh and the devil, and death to boot, and the North Atlantic for good measure."

"One thing no man can lick is death," I commented.

"By God, Cap'n Munck did it!" said Bill savagely. "Soldier of fortune. Not the movie kind, though. He was short and stocky like me, with wide shoulders and no belly, you bet, and kind of steady in the eye when he looked at you. Say, did you read about those brass cannon they dug up at Fort Churchill, on Hudson's Bay?"

"Who dug 'em up?"

"Hudson's Bay Company men, when they founded the post there. Those cannon were stamped with *'C4,'* which means *Christian IV*. He was a king of Denmark, if you recall your history."

"HOLD on, now." I laid on the oars, eyed Bill severely, and thought back. "What are you trying to hand me? Fort Churchill was founded somewhere around 1700. Christian IV of Denmark lived about eighty years before that."

"Correct. The year was 1619. Cap'n Munck had adventured in Brazil and all over the map, joined the Danish navy, took embassies hither and yon, and made quite a name for himself. When King Christian decided to grab North America and get ahead of the Pilgrim Fathers, he sent Cap'n Munck to do the job. Gave him a good stout ship, the *Unicorn*, with a crew of about fifty, and the *Lamprey*, with a crew of sixteen. She was a little cat, the kind I've described; a sloop, if you prefer the word, decked over. About as big as a lifeboat, or maybe two rolled into one."

"For a college professor, you're vague on detail," I observed. Bill grinned at me.

"Boy, you don't know college professors! Well, Cap'n Munck started in May, and in September he was in Hudson's Bay. Storm all the way, and no charts,

the World

L. B. WILLIAMS

and storm in the bay itself. And what happened? It blew him slap into the one good harbor there—pure blind luck! Square into a river mouth. And there he was, aiming to start a colony and seize this whole continent for Denmark, and knowing no more about the place than you would if you woke up tomorrow morning in Tibet. The dream in his eyes and the glow in his heart—"

"Master Munck! The moon—look to the moon! Judgment Day for all of us!"

The terrific adventure of a Scandinavian crew in Hudson's Bay forms the basis of this sixteenth story in the "Ships and Men" series.

WRONG. The glow was in the eyes of Jens Munck, as he stepped ashore on the river flats under massive pines that grew close down to the water, a forest primeval, a land primeval and empty—his! For the moment, he took no thought to the fury of the September gale blowing snow that stung, blowing in ice that scored great weals along the ships. New land, his land, found and gripped!

Steady eyes, weather-wrinkled, true. Steady hand, that fell on the shoulder of the stout youngster beside him, Erik his nephew, last of the Munck strain.

"My land!" he said in his deep voice. "Our land, Denmark's land! As vast as Russia, it may be, richer than Siberia. Well, enough of dream! Now to work. Ho, John Watson! Move the ships upstream to that cove, away from the ice!"

The English mate fell to work, with the weary men.

All these long weeks they had been battling ice and storm, fighting through the iron straits. Snow was coming in on the east wind, and bitter winter was howling among the deep trees.

The ships were kedged a bit upstream to a cove. On the shore, Munck and his nephew stood, and with them a third. No man, this Biorn, but a mastiff, with eyes steady and true as those of his master. The dog went leaping among the trees for joy of the land, and Erik Munck with him. Smiling a little, Cap'n Munck turned back to his job. Winter ahead, a colony to found, dreams to come true!

But there was no man, no native, not even an Eskimo, to tell them of the winter so close upon them.

All hands pitched in to make the two ships secure from ice. At low tide, logs were hammered into the mud; an ice-jam was made about the hulls, filled with rocks solidly. Chaplain and surgeon and captain labored with the rest. John Watson, the English mate, was a dour, massive man who had the strength of three.

MASSIVE hawsers moored the ships to the trees ashore; the water was pumped out; the bottoms were scraped, the smashed rudders mended. Slow work, all of this, running into weeks.

"And now for the winter that's on us," said Munck, when all hands gathered one cold evening. "Thank God, we've come through all safe; we have stores of all kinds, powder of the best, tools, everything to keep us until spring. Two of us are surgeons, to answer for our health. Shall we winter aboard or ashore?"

They looked ashore at the dark soughing trees and the drifting snow.

"The ship's a house; keep it!" said John Watson. "There's wood for the cutting."

"No lack, lads," assented Munck. "And with the stones about, we can build hearths for fires, here on the decks. Warm clothing, no end of it. Do we stay?"

Stay, they voted gladly, and so fell to work with the stones ready to hand. Three huge fireplaces were built, two on the ship and one on the cat. What better than staying here, close to provisions, and casks of wine and kegs of Danish beer?

The days grew shorter, and the snow piled so thick ashore that none could leave the ship save a few who contrived snowshoes. October passed. Great piles and stacks of logs were cut and laid ready for the fires, but the intense dry cold of the northland was setting in; the frightful frost of the Arctic was at hand, crackling and banging through the forest like great guns at work. On the shore, ice was thundering, piling high.

The men suffered. By night or day, by fire or sunlight, they had no warmth except in bed, and little enough there. The chests of woollens were broken out and clothes were heaped on. They were useless, and worse than useless, hampering the circulation and giving scant protection against such cold as the Danes had never known.

There was none to tell them that in this land men could winter alive in only one way. Biorn alone suffered nothing from the deadly frost.

The others had no furs, and could shoot only a few foxes. One night a fusil banged, and all hands came tumbling on deck. A dog had come up to the ship, and lay dead; the man on guard had taken it for a fox. They did not save the fur.

Lethargy crept upon the men. One of the surgeons was down with some unknown rotting sickness. Captain Munck felt uneasiness and a strange horror growing within him. He gave of his boundless energy keeping the men at work and play, buoyed them up with cheery words and example; yet they drooped. He too was pierced to the heart by the frightful cold; only at night, huddling in the berth he shared with Erik, did he know warmth. The mastiff helped here too, for Biorn had comfort and was never cold.

Suddenly the real frost of November came swooping down, and winter was upon them.

The Norwegian Cat—from an etching by Yngve E. Soderberg

A pistol-shot rang out in the darkness. Munck leaped out of bed and hauled on his clothes and boots. Another shot and another. Men were shouting. Biorn caught the wild contagion, and his deep-lunged barking filled the cabin.

"Indians!" cried Erik. "An attack!"

Munck burst out and stumbled on deck, where one of the fires was flickering. Another shot and another; they sounded from below. Men appeared. Shouts resounded, and dwindled into laughter, as the sick surgeon came dragging himself out in wild fright. No shooting after all, it seemed. Merely the frost, reaching into the surgeon's chest of medicines and exploding the bottles, one after another.

Before day came, not a glass bottle was left aboard.

There was food in plenty—salt meat and fish of the best. The men, however,

"God help me, lad. I'll not shame you either," Munck groaned.

Illustrated by George Avison

lost appetite; they complained of nausea, of swelling joints, of loosening teeth. They huddled about the fires, in the grip of lethargy.

Munck worked desperately with them but could spur them into nothing, save the one task of cutting wood. He himself, with Erik or John Watson, braved the terrible frost and ventured out on the ice of the bay, or up the frozen river, but saw no living thing. He would take Biorn, when no one else would go.

DECEMBER came in. On the tenth, Munck and John Watson and the mastiff took to the ice, but before they had gone a half-mile, a cry of terror broke from the mate.

"Master Munck! The moon—look to the moon!"

Munck peered into the frost-white sky, where a full moon hung; they lived by night now, for daylight was almost gone. And as he peered up, he saw the earth's shadow creeping across the disk. He looked at the mate and laughed.

"An eclipse, John. It's nothing."

They watched, keeping moving for the sake of warmth. A howl broke from Biorn, and Watson uttered a choked cry.

"Nothing, is it? Judgment Day for all of us, that's what it is. Look! For the love of God, master, look at the sign!"

The eclipse was full. About the moon was a large glowing circle of luminous fire, and in the dark round shadow of the earth was a radiant cross.

"I'll come out no more," said Watson in stark terror. "Doom is on us all; keep to the ice if you will, but I'm done."

He went stumbling and slipping back to the river and the ships.

Jens Munck called Biorn to him, hugged the dog for warmth, and watched the eclipse drift past. Gripping his musket, he headed on across the ice-waste, seeking only the exercise he must have, driving his iron will to it. No living creature was in sight.

Judgment Day? Doom? The words of John Watson lingered with him. To his mind came thought of these men whom he had led here, and who depended on him alone. The boy Erik, whom he loved with all his heart, and in whom he saw his own sturdy youth renewed. His second mate, Hans Brock, who had been in bed long weeks, helpless. The priest, the cabin boy, the stout-hearted Danish seamen. Himself, who had slaved in Brazil and coasted the sunny Spanish shores.

The uneasiness, the nameless horror, grew within him. Something was wrong; he knew not what. This land lay outside his experience. And because he was a very brave and simple gentleman, he came to his knees on the ice and prayed to God, for strength and wisdom to accomplish his task and see these others safe home again.

From the heaped ice-masses along the shores of the bay drifted the melancholy and sinister howl of a wolf. A growl broke from Biorn, a growl and a ringing

bark of challenge; with a rush, the mastiff went hurtling toward the shore, and was gone from sight.

Later, Biorn came back to the ship, with slashes in his pelt and blood frozen about his jaws, and a look of calm satisfaction in his sad eyes as he dropped down and licked his wounds. He, at least, had not failed.

Two days after, the chief surgeon died. So terrible was the frost that for another two days his body remained unburied; not even Munck could go ashore in this dread cold that bit to the very marrow. The other surgeon was staggering; many of the men were sick, and there was no cure for them.

MUNCK forced himself to keep up daily entries in his log; writing was his sole outlet and relief. Watson was muttering about the wrath of heaven, though as yet he remained well and hearty, and his mutterings infected the spirits of the rest. Young Erik whistled up the men to games and skylarking, but soon this fell flat. The frost deepened; wolves howled from the forest; the great trees creaked and banged like devils let loose.

The remaining surgeon could offer little help. He himself was barely keeping his feet, and he showed Munck discolored swollen limbs and teeth falling out.

"Try liquor," he said in desperation. "A pint of whisky, two pints of wine to each man per day."

At first this helped; then nothing helped. Some melted the frozen wine, swigged it down with the whisky, and relaxed in drunken torpor. Others took it more slowly, but only complained the more when it was gone. The priest was sick now; Munck rallied him, however, and rallied the men.

"Christmas is on the way. Up, and moving!" His hearty ringing voice stirred them to life. "Out, Erik, and cut greens! Come along, John."

Watson grumbled, but got his ax and accompanied them ashore. The tireless energy of Munck, the boyish abandon and high courage of Erik, swept through them all, lent them new vigor. Green branches were hung about; frozen kegs of wine and beer were brought up and thawed; the decks were cleared of ice and snow; wood was cut and brought in.

"Thank God, lad, I believe we've turned the corner!" said Munck that night, as he crawled shivering into bed. He pummeled Erik, and Erik lashed back at him; laughing, panting, they worked each other into a glow, while Biorn leaped on them with furious delighted barking.

"Let's hope we have, Uncle," exclaimed Erik, and said nothing of the lethargy that had been creeping on him these days. "Once this accursed sickness is past, we can make shift to endure the cold. We can't fight both at once."

"Bah! We can fight all hell!" Munck cried cheerfully. "Men were made to fight, lad, and there's no fight unless the enemy is stout. Merry Christmas!"

Christmas Eve brought wine and beer thawed out by the keg, and jollity reigned supreme with song and story. Munck was bubbling over with vigor and good humor. He told them how, at twelve years of age, he swam to the Brazilian coast from a shot-shattered ship, and for a year earned his keep over a cobbler's last. All the fantasy of true adventure, sprinkled with comical interludes that kept everyone in a roar.

A memorable night, a gay night, while the log fires roared high. No fights, no drunken brawl; sober, clear-headed men, these Danes. They could drink or die with a smile and a steady word and a firm handclasp.

With the morrow, the chaplain did his duty right manfully and preached them a fine hearty sermon. According to old Danish custom, all hands chipped in to make the priest a handsome present; little money enough, but some of them had white fox furs, which they gave to line his coat. He, good man, intended missionary to the New World and chaplain of the Danish colony to be, was full of dreams and fervor, and the snowy heathen coasts stirred the heart in him mightily. Yet he was not to go ashore after the manner of his dreams.

The corner was turned; Munck was sure of it, and instilled eager confidence in them from cabin boy to priest. He watched, as day followed day, and kept all hands stirred up joyously, until New Year's day clamped down with frost such as they had never yet felt. It was terrific. It took the heart out of them. It put uneasy fear even into the stout soul of Munck himself.

THEN, suddenly, the mysterious rotting sickness ravaged them. The surgeon took to his berth; the priest followed. The chief cook died. Munck, hearing John Watson talk darkly about doom and Judgment Day, flew into a fury but kept himself in hand. He went down into the

"Better to stay here," cried one of the seamen. "Out there is only death!"

dark cabin to find Erik there, drooping and smitten; Erik had to tell him the truth at last.

At this, Munck quivered; the blow went deep. A low cry burst from him, and he fled to the cabin where the surgeon lay. He exploded in frantic words:

"Do something—you *must!* Tell me what to do. This is what you're here for. We must do something for these men, make use of every remedy. Tell me what to get from your chest."

"Death, and relieve us all, if you will," mumbled the surgeon from swollen gums. "I've used as many remedies as I can find, and they do no good. If God won't help, there's no remedy."

DAY followed day, death followed death; January wore on; coffins were knocked together and buried in the snow ashore. Hans Brock, the second mate, died at last, and Munck stirred up everyone to lay him away as befitted an officer.

The priest was propped up in his berth to mumble a funeral sermon, death in his eyes, and his dreams gone glimmering. The small guns were discharged; the frost had contracted them, and they burst. More men came down, dragged into their berths, and moved not. Munck, tending his brother's son with gentle hand, saw that Erik was going from bad to worse.

Agonized, he sought out the dying surgeon, and berated him with passionate incoherent words, scarce knowing what he said. The living corpse sighed back:

"If God won't help, there's no hope."

"God!" said Munck, clenching his fists. He sought out the priest, who was now almost past speech.

"Help me, help us all!" he said hoarsely. Close to breaking was Jens Munck. "I've prayed—you do it now. There's nothing else. Make Him help, force Him to help—damn it, what good are you if you can't do this? What's faith, to us?"

He stamped up and down the cabin, raving in a burst of wild blasphemy, cursing God and the mystery of this sickness, like a veritable madman. It was love and grief for the boy that tore him asunder, until he had exhausted himself with frantic words. Then he heard the voice of the dying priest.

"Steady, Jens, steady. God knows His business. You're quick at cursing, lad, but you're alive and well. We're dying men. Pray for us."

Pray for us. This was the last word the priest spoke, then or ever. Jens Munck felt all the wild furious rebellion go out of him, and flung himself down beside the berth in a desperate agony of prayer, not for himself but for these dying men.

When he came to rise, it was not easy. He realized suddenly that his knees were swollen, and his fingers. So he knew that

it had come to him, as to all the others except the mastiff Biorn. Upon Munck, as upon them, now lay the hand of death. The shock came, and lifted; he went back again to his nephew Erik with the calm and quiet assurance of one who has now passed all fear.

A punishment, he thought, for his wild blasphemy. He made no complaint.

The days wore horribly along, an incredible and intolerable round past all human bearing; yet it was borne. Day followed day, with biting frost and cold beyond endurance. Yet men endured, creeping or staggering about, clinging hard to life. February drew half its span away. John Watson and five others, besides Munck, alone were able to lift hand to any work.

Munck's iron will fought the deathly lethargy and kept it at bay. He drove himself to labor each hour of each day, living as in some evil dream. Food to fetch, the sick to tend, wood to cut, water to be melted from snow; Erik dying in the cabin, and the dead to be buried.

For the sake of the boy, he lashed himself ever to fresh hopes, to new efforts. He plied what drugs he found in the surgeons' chests; he experimented with new forms of diet; knowing nothing of scurvy, he did not hit the clue. There was no help, from food, from drugs, from heaven.

JOHN WATSON was staggering now, doomed, but still putting his brute strength to whatever Munck directed. February passed by, and March came in, dragging its weary course, with frost and blizzard and hammering ice.

Jens Munck fought on, grimly. Like some lonely wild bird, he went on his ever-lengthening rounds, from cabin to forecastle, from dying to dead, with food and drink here, and a prayer there. Even to melt the snow and ice into water became labor of the hardest. Besides, none of them were now able to bring in more fuel. The fires died, but could not be left dead. Munck stirred himself anew, and began to break up the small boats for the flames, and hewed into the bulwarks. Even to swing an ax, however, was nearly impossible.

April came, and Erik smiled and died.

"I'll not shame you, Uncle," he had said at the last. Munck went to pieces then, in the frightful cold solitude of the cabin, clasping the poor dead hand as he knelt; went to pieces and lost his grip, for a little, until the words of the boy came back to him and steeled him.

"God help me, lad, I'll not shame you either," he groaned, and wiped the freezing tears from his shaggy cheeks. It was a vow to be kept.

There was no pause, no rest, no break in the days that dragged on in relentless and unending agony; through everything, Jens Munck doggedly forced himself to struggle on against the insuperable. Beyond the mystery of this pestilence which nothing could abate lay death; he fought the one and the other without ceasing.

Among the supplies of the dead surgeons, he came one day on bundles of forgotten herbs. He was grasping at any straw now, quite literally. He dumped the bundles into a cask of melted wine, stirred them together, and summoned all hands to join him. Only four men answered the call.

One by one, each was aided to climb into the cask, there to bathe in the strange mixture. Here was a clue in the right direction, had Munck been able to recognize it, for this bath refreshed and helped all four of them to renewed life. The next day was Good Friday, and Munck read the sermon for that day to the four. No others were so much as able to sit up and listen.

Day followed day in the Arctic darkness.

Among all his grim duties, Munck managed to keep entries going in his log, thus counting the endless days. April merged into May, and John Watson died, but there was none to bury him.

Munck could only crawl about. Two of the four men had dragged themselves over the side, falling to the snow below, creeping to the shore to die on solid ground. The other two were in their berths, dying. On the decks and in the forecastle, men lay dead.

Spring, and thawing snows, wild geese and other flocks winging overhead, Biorn going ashore on forays, ice drifting out; and the ship a charnel-house of hell. What the little *Lamprey* was like, alongside, Munck did not know; he could no longer reach the rail to look at her. The days and weeks passed. The stench from the rotting ship was past bearing, but the bitter frost had gone.

HERE at last was June, and the fight ended. Munck came out of a stupor one morning to hear the wolves howling from the shore, with Biorn answering their challenge from the deck above. Here was the end. He dragged himself out of his berth and back again. There

was no strength left in him. There was no food, and he could not reach the galley. On the deck beside his berth, the cabin-boy lay dead. No living soul existed in all the ship now, except the one man here whose will fought on.

DAYS passed, four of them, with no food. It was the end; with shaking hand Jens Munck opened his logbook for the last time and scrawled words that sprang from a soul of iron:

"I now have no more hope of life. . . . Herewith, good night to all the world, and my soul to God."

He relapsed into stupor.

Then Biorn came to him. The hot eager tongue licked his hand, licked his bearded matted face, fetched him back to flickering life. The torment of thirst spurred him to one last vital effort. He dragged himself out, gained the ladder, crawled out on deck. A draft of wine gave him a little strength; and hearing voices, he crept to the bulwarks and looked out. There on shore were two ragged scarecrow figures—the two men who had gone ashore to die. Instead, they had lived.

They got aboard, helped him away from the deathly ship, and built a fire to keep animals off. The three of them ate the young grass, sucked the roots of vines and green things. And this green food, like magic, drained the sickness out of them. Haggard, shaggy, shadows of men, they yielded to the insensate craving that was more powerful than all their wisdom; and strength returned.

"And now, what?" said Jens Munck. His steady, purposeful eyes looked past the other two, at the big ship and the little cat. "Let's settle it. What's to be done?"

They sucked the broth, made from fish and fresh game shot down, in silence. They were seamen, obedient, able men, but shattered in will and resolve. In Munck alone gathered energy and driving power of decision, as he sat and fondled the ears of the mastiff.

"Stay here? Useless. We must go home, and come back again with fresh crews, make a new start. Furs! We must have furs, to keep out the cold, next time. And herbs of all kinds, green things; yes, we've learned our lesson. The wilderness remains here for us; the dead remain. The land is still ours!"

The other two stared at him stupidly.

"Go home?" said one, and pointed to the two ships, fast in their solid berths.

"How can we go? We've no men to work ship, master."

Munck's thin lips twisted under his beard.

"We've ourselves, lads; enough, with a bit of help."

"Help? From whom, master?"

"Kneel down," said Munck, and they obeyed. He looked up to the skies of brief Arctic summer, and spoke to the Great Spirit, somewhat in the simple and quiet fashion of the Indians he had never seen. For when men are reduced to nothing under the wide sky, they come close to the reality of the invisible. Then he rose, and smiled, and held out his hands to them. "Come, lads. Let's to work."

They worked, as their strength lasted and waned and returned again. Not with the ship, for this was beyond them, but with the little *Lamprey*. The rotting corpses were put into the water. The cargo was lifted out of her; even the ballast was cleared, until with a flood tide the cat floated free and came out of the ice-break that had been built about her.

Then the ballast in again, and stores, and casks filled with water from the river; after this, she had to be rigged afresh. Nor was Munck yet satisfied. His vision looked forward until the time when he would return, this year or next, with fresh colonists and other ships. They would have need, then, of all the supplies still aboard the *Unicorn*. So he drove the groaning men to more work, boring holes in the stout oaken planks; and they watched her settle and go down.

"And now, in the name of God, let's start for home!" said Munck.

THEY went aboard, took Biorn with them, and cast off, on a July Sunday. A full year ago they had entered Hudson Straits, there to fight ice and storm six long weeks ere reaching this spot; and the thought of fighting back through those iron-cliffed straits consumed them with a hopeless terror. They were still weak, emaciated, suffering. The bay before them was strewn with ice-pans and huge floes, hung heavy with ice-mist and fog. Beyond all this horror of the new world lay the Atlantic to be crossed, and three of them only, to do it. It was an utter impossibility.

The two seamen broke. They could not face it. They refused flatly.

"Better to stay here," cried one of them, and covered Munck with his fusil. "Here we have everything; we can live; we can find the Indians, gain strength and

life. Out there is only death. We have done enough. Go if you like; we stay here."

Another man would have reached for his pistol. Munck swung an arm about the neck of the big dog, looked at the two panic-stricken men, and smiled.

"Enough? One can never do enough," he said gently. "This is our land, lads, Denmark's land. I'll be back, never fear, and you with me; but now, home's waiting for us. A stanch little ship, this cat. D'ye mind how our fathers sailed the four seas in ships like this one, opened up Iceland, conquered half the world?"

"Sail her yourself, if you like," said he with the musket. "Not I."

MUNCK talked on. The two men looked at one another, glanced at the corpses strewn along the shore where snowbanks had melted, eyed the dark silent forest. After all, they were seamen and Danes. So in the end the fusil went down and they sailed out from the river of death and on their way.

As Munck had noted, the drift of the ice was eastward toward the straits. When the mist closed them in, he made fast with a grapnel to a floe, and let the cat drift safely. But now, as though to test utterly his stout heart, the last thing that he loved was stripped from him.

He was sleeping below, when the cries of the men wakened him, and the mad barking of Biorn. He came on deck just in time to see the mastiff go leaping over the rail to the ice, in furious headlong pursuit of a polar bear which had approached closely. In vain Munck whistled him back. Night came down, and a bitter gusty wind, parting the little craft from the floe.

"Head back!" said the men eagerly, for they too loved the dog. "We can find him, master. We can find the floe again."

"Leave the lines alone," Munck said. "Look at the ice there in the darkness—more of it! Wind's coming. We'd waste our strength, and we need every ounce of it. Besides, the search is vain."

Wind and ice smote them. Yet during two whole days they could hear the mastiff's voice from across the floes. The great barks dwindled to faint and dismal howls, and died away; Jens Munck held on grimly. Tempest came down and hit them hard, smashing the rudder and threatening final disaster. Munck grappled another floe and made repairs, with a heart close to breaking.

Once again there settled down a dreary round of intolerable days, tempest and ice and fog, enough to drive them all mad. Weeks of it, a full month of it, before they were across the bay and found the west end of the Straits. Then they drifted with the ice under the iron cliffs.

Out of the Straits at last, smack into the heart of such a storm as even Jens Munck had scarcely seen; but it came from the west. For such weather as this, the stanch little cat had been built; she scudded before it, riding the giant combers like a duck, and so on toward home.

In a bleak September day, a Norwegian bonder saw a boat come in, and went down to the cove to meet it. Then he signed himself and stood all a-stare, in fear and terror, deeming that trolls or devils had come out of the sea. Three gaunt figures came ashore, so shaggy and salt-encrusted and staggering as to seem scarce human. Not until Munck held a pistol to his head, would the peasant lend a hand to make the cat secure.

"AND that was the end of it," said Bill Joyce, as we headed in toward the dock.

I rested the oars, staring at him. "But that's no end, Bill! Did Munck go back?"

"He found war had broken out. He was called into the navy again, and died fighting. But man, did you ever clap eye on greater words than those he wrote down in that dreadful cabin?" Bill's eye flashed; his face lighted up, as he quoted them: *"Herewith, good night to all the world, and my soul to God."*

"Where'd you get all this yarn, Bill?" I asked curiously.

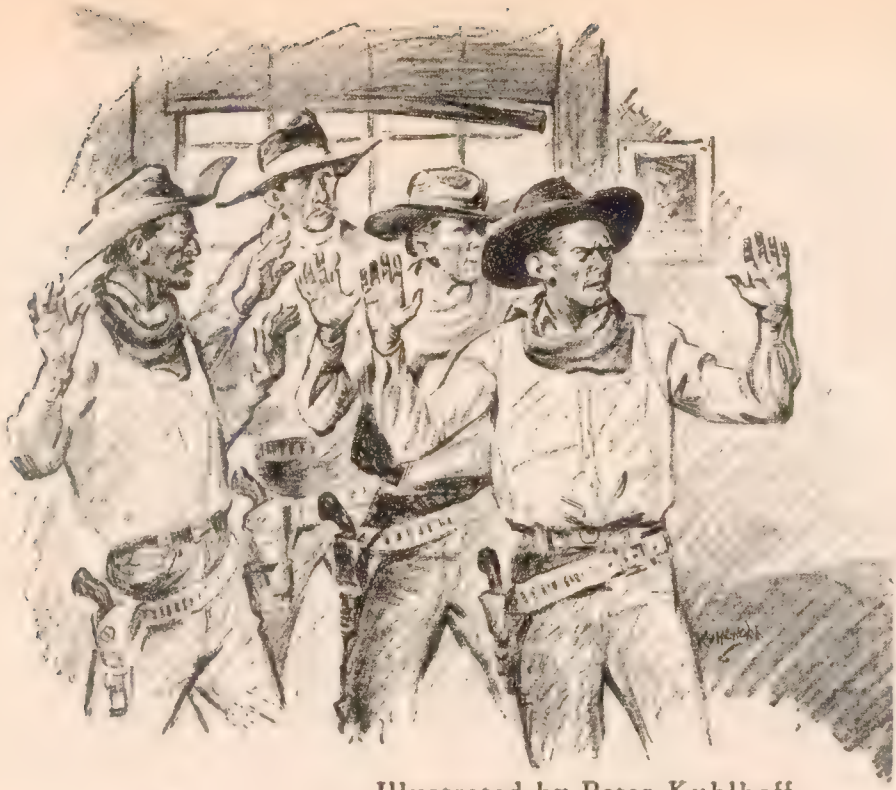
"From his own logbook."

"And what became of the ship he sank so safely?"

Bill grinned. "That's funny. The Indians came down to the shore, a couple of weeks after Munck started home, and found the ship. At low tide they started to plunder it, and built fires to dry out the stuff. The fires reached the powder-kegs and blew 'em all to kingdom come. When the Hudson's Bay people started a post there, a hundred years later, the Indian legends led them to the spot, and they dug up those brass cannon. And there's your story—the yarn of the Norway cat. Hey! For the love of Mike, slow up! I've got a fish!"

Not that the fish mattered much, after that story.

Another fine story in this famous "Ships and Men" series will appear in our next issue.



Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff

A PRICE on

By WILLIAM

The Story So Far:

BENEATH his photograph on the post-office wall at Fair Play, Blake Forrest read a very accurate description of himself, coupled with an offer of one thousand dollars for his arrest. He was wanted for robbing the president of the bank at Rosedale, Jake Gildea, of six thousand dollars; and for the hold-up of an express-car on the Texas and Pacific.

Steve Porter, a young Texas Ranger present, remarked on the resemblance of Blake to the picture; and Blake offered to go with him to the Sheriff's office. Outside, he escaped by a ruse, vaulted onto his horse and was out of range before the young officer could get into action.

Forrest was about to make camp that night in the brush when he came upon a young woman almost exhausted from thirst. She proved to be Janet King, the daughter of a prominent rancher; on her way to town she had been thrown from her horse and the beast had run away.

The wanted man cared for her that night, and next day took her back to town on his own horse—with the result that he was recaptured by the ranger and placed in Sheriff Waggoner's jail. The Sheriff, however, was an old friend of Blake's—who knew, indeed, a thing or two about Buzz Waggoner's past. And Forrest persuaded Waggoner to allow him to escape in order to round up evidence to clear himself of the false train-robbery charge—this on Blake's promise to give himself up again in two weeks.

Shortly after he had started on his quest, Forrest plunged into a flooded creek and rescued four people from drowning; but later when they sought to thank him, he had ridden away unrecognized; and in a line-rider's cabin he met a cowboy pal, Bill Crabb, who with one Stone Heath had been with Forrest at time of the T. & P. hold-up, and could confirm his alibi. Forrest and Crabb separately sought evidence proving Forrest's suspicion that the Terrell gang were the ones really guilty of the hold-up. In this they were surprisingly successful; then they set out for Forrest's promised return to custody.

Here their evidence seemed so conclusive to Robinson (the district attor-

Copyright, 1938, by McCall Corporation (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.

A spirited novel of the West when it was wild, by the gifted author of "The Yukon Trail" and many other books.

HIS HEAD

MacLeod Raine

ney), that he unofficially suspended the hold-up charge until the rangers could investigate this new angle.

Meanwhile, Janet King, chagrined at having been the cause of Forrest's recapture, had—before her return to Granite Gap ranch—induced her father's old friend Judge Henry Vallery to undertake the outcast's defence, and during Forrest's trial on the bank-robbery indictment, Vallery brought out the fact that the purported crime had been in effect an enforced restitution of money obtained by trickery from Forrest's widowed mother, some years previous; and that Forrest had not even drawn a gun upon the banker, Jake Gildea. And when a young girl, a spectator at the trial, identified Blake as the rescuer of the train-passengers at flooded Funnel Creek, Vallery—much against the wishes of Forrest—deftly used this irrelevant information to sway the jury to an acquittal.

That evening Blake Forrest was guest of honor at the Vallery house, where were also Janet King and her father. Curtis King offered Forrest a job on one of his ranches, provided he wished to rehabilitate himself. Then Crabb and Heath arrived with a quiet warning that the Terrell gang was "out for him"—and to avoid a fracas at his host's home, Blake returned to the hotel, still hoping to evade a showdown. And when by a mischance he and his two pals met the gang face to face, he bluffed them into disclaiming any desire for trouble. To be sure, they did not know he was unarmed! But he knew the problem was not solved, only postponed. *(The story continues in detail:)*

Sheriff Buzz Waggoner seated the guests he had invited to his office.

"Glad to see you, boys," he said heartily. "Like I told you, Mr. Robinson wants to talk over with you your evidence in the Texas & Pacific train-robbery."

"About time he got busy," Wes Terrell said, his mouth set in a sneer. "I'd got to thinking this killer Forrest had the Indian sign on Robinson. Why wasn't the scalawag arrested the minute

the jury acquitted him of the bank hold-up?"

"We weren't quite ready," the prosecuting attorney answered calmly. "The evidence wasn't all in order." He turned to Ray Terrell. "You're still prepared to swear, as you did in the affidavit you signed, that you absolutely recognized Forrest when his mask slipped?"

The Lieutenant sat on the edge of the table, one foot dangling.

"Like to gather the loose threads together a little closer, boys," he said. "Where were you standing when you recognized Forrest, Ray?"

"In the express-car. He wasn't ten feet from me."

"How many men were with him?"

"Get out o' here, you fool! You can't do it twice, and get away with it!"

"Bet your boots," the express messenger replied promptly. "I'd know that bird among a thousand."

"He seems to have an alibi," Robinson mentioned. "His friends Heath and Crabb claim to have been with him sixty or seventy miles away from the Crossing when the train was stuck up."

"Sure they claim it," Walsh snarled. "Why wouldn't they, when they were in it up to their necks their own selves?"

"They're a bad bunch, the whole mess of them," Wes Terrell urged angrily. "Don't let them fool you, Robinson. Why, only last night the three of them were all set to rub us out, and they would have done it too—if they hadn't seen we were ready for them."

"I heard about that," Waggoner said mildly; "you kind of showed 'em up, eh?"

The door opened. Lieutenant Bronson walked into the room, followed by Steve Porter and another ranger.

"We're turning the meeting over to Lieutenant Bronson," Waggoner said.

Wes Terrell leaped to his feet, uncertain what this might mean. Webb Lake did not move. His cold slaty eyes fastened on the officer of rangers. Nothing to be alarmed about, he told himself. Probably Bronson had come to talk the case over with them again.

"Three," said Ray.

"Did you know any of the others?"

"Not for sure, but one of them looked to me like that fellow Stone Heath. About the same build, and he walked the same you-be-damned cocksure way."

"Weren't you surprised that Forrest didn't bump you off after you had seen him without his mask?"

"He didn't know I'd seen him. I turned away quick."

Swiftly the ranger officer swung round on Wes Terrell. "You left Deer Trail very early the morning of Tuesday, April 22, in the company of Walsh and Lake. Where were you between then and Friday afternoon?"

Wes Terrell had a queer feeling of collapse at the pit of his stomach.

"We went hunting," he said. "Why?"

"Where did you hunt? Who did you meet while you were away?"

"We were in the brush country back of Dry Valley. Didn't meet anybody after we left the road. Why—what's—"

"Bring back any game with you?"

"No. All we got was a wild boar and a white-tail too gaunted to take home."

"Anybody with you except your two friends here?"

Terrell hesitated a barely perceptible instant. "Yes. We picked up Luke Schrader at his place seven miles out o' town and he went along."

"What the hell is all this questioning?" demanded Walsh.

Bronson was a slim broad-shouldered young man with a hawk nose and steely gray eyes that had a tremendous thrust. "Any objections to explaining your movements?" he asked Walsh quietly.

"I dunno whether I have or not," answered Walsh sulkily. "I don't have to answer all the fool questions a dumb ranger flings at me."

"Not if you don't want to, Pres," the Lieutenant said. "Suit yourself."

"I have no objection to giving you an account of my whereabouts," Lake spoke up. "That is, if you're interested in where I was too."

"Fine." Without the slightest warning Bronson exploded a question under him that was like a bomb. "Were you in the village of Horse Creek on Wednesday, April 23, about noon or a little later?"

THE wooden face with which Lake looked at him did not betray how wildly the man's heart was racing.

"No sir, I was not," he snapped.

"Didn't meet a girl named Willie Fulwiler, who was spelling her father at the depot while he went home to get his dinner?"

"Never heard of her."

"Then of course you couldn't have got a telegram from her that arrived while you were there, one addressed to Sam Jones and signed *Mamie,* mentioning that a baby was arriving on the evening express. . . . No, keep your hands right where they are, Pres. We have every last one of you covered."

"You can't do this to us!" roared Wes Terrell, attempting bluster. "We won't stand for it a minute."

"Throw up your hands, all four of you," ordered Bronson, crisp command ringing in his voice. "And don't make a mistake."

Eight hands went into the air, reluctantly.

"Disarm them, Steve," the Lieutenant continued.

When this had been done, Bronson continued his interrogatory.

"When you sent the telegram I have mentioned, Ray, from Santone, how come you to be so careless as to file it personally instead of by a kid you could have got to do it for a thin dime?"

"I didn't file any telegram," Ray Terrell made sullen response.

"We're prepared to prove you did. A witness has already identified you without you being aware of it. Four people picked you out in the courthouse during the Valley Bank trial, Lake, as being the man who called himself Sam Jones at Horse Creek. Your gray gelding has been identified too. A little under-cover work, you understand. Wes Terrell, Pres Walsh and Luke Schrader were seen with you riding away from Crawford's Crossing not an hour after the hold-up. And finally, Wes, a woman—a friend of yours—has been crowded into doing some talking."

"That's a lie," blurted Terrell, perspiration beading on his face. "The whole thing is a frame-up."

"You'll find it's not," Bronson told him. "You're in a jackpot for big stakes holding a busted flush. —Sheriff, I'll have to borrow handcuffs from you."

"You aiming to arrest us?" Ray Terrell said, his face white.

"I have already arrested you. . . . Put on the cuffs, Steve. I reckon Buzz will help you."

"With a heap of pleasure," Waggoner agreed. He added, drawling the words: "Maybe it will be a comfort for you to know that Blake Forrest tipped us off you and yore pals had done this. He worked it all out, fitting the pieces in like a puzzle. You tried to hang it on him, and he figured the best defence was to find out who did it. So, putting this and that together, he dug up enough to hand you boys a nice long jolt in the pen. What loaded him with suspicions first was yore anxiety to rub him out before he could prove his alibi."

"He's trying to shift this from himself to us," Wes Terrell snarled, his face ugly with rage and fear.

"You'll have a chance to prove that at the trial," Bronson told him. "All right, Buzz. I reckon your prisoners are anxious to see their new quarters."

The Sheriff led them down the corridor.

CHAPTER XVII

AT the Granite Gap ranch, as with others of the big cattle demesnes of the open range, the lavishness of the hospitality was almost feudal. Never a day passed without at least half a dozen guests sitting down to dinner either with the men or at the family table. Any stranger crossing the country was welcome to stay for the night.

Between the life of the cowboys and the young woman at "the big house," as the large rambling Southern-type home of the Kings was called by those on the payroll, a sharp division line existed. In the careless atmosphere of the place, democratic though it was in one sense, no brush-popper ever overstepped by a hair the proper respect due Janet. The sons of Curtis were hazed like any other youngsters, but the name of his daughter was never mentioned at the bunk-house or around a camp-fire.

When Blake Forrest arrived with Stone Heath, he turned his horse into the big pasture and walked with his friend to the bunk-house. A message came by young Curt King that his father wanted to see Forrest at the big house. Blake strolled up and was met by Curtis King on the porch.

"Come in," the ranchman said, and led the way to his office. "This is how it shapes, Forrest: My foreman at the Big Bend ranch, Will Ellison, has picked up quite a bunch of stock for himself and wants to start on his own. I've talked with stockmen who know you, and they all tell the same story: You know cows. You understand every angle of the business." He stopped, looking at his guest with shrewd appraising eyes.

BLAKE guessed what was in his mind. "That's not all they said," he suggested with a smile.

"You're right," Curtis King answered promptly. "They said you would make the best foreman in Texas—if you'd quit helling around."

"I've quit," the young man told him.

"Fine," the owner of the Granite Gap answered, with no certainty in his voice. "When did you quit? After you walked up from Vallery's house the other night and almost had a battle with that Terrell outfit, hardly an hour after you had promised me you would walk round them if you could?"

"Here's my story about that," Forrest said quietly. "My friends came to tell me the Terrells meant trouble. I didn't want them to waylay me outside the Vallery house, so I decided to go to my room at the hotel. We took the short-cut through the bar to the lobby—and walked into the enemy. Wes Terrell headed me off. I wasn't armed. Nothing left to do but make a bluff. I walked to the end of the bar and began deviling Terrell to start smoking. He thought we had come in there to fight the thing out. As I figured, he hadn't sand enough to go through. His friends waited for him to say what it would be, and he said nothing doing. That's all there was to it."

"Glad to know that. Now these scoundrels are locked up, there won't be so much pressure on you. Well, as I said, Ellison wants to quit. Not right away, but in three-four months. My idea is for you to go down to the Big Bend ranch and learn the ropes so as to take his place. We can fix up a deal by which you get a small cut-in on the profits as a bonus."

"Let's get this clear, Mr. King," the younger man said bluntly: "Are you making me this offer because you think I'm the best man you can find for the place, or because you feel indebted to me for bringing your daughter back to town when she was lost?"

The ranch-owner leaned back in his chair, his steel-hard eyes fixed on the other man. "I don't mix sentiment with business, Forrest. If I didn't think you the man for this job, I wouldn't offer it to you. There's danger in it, and mighty few I know could handle it satisfactorily to me. Nothing can alter the fact that I'm eternally grateful to you for saving my daughter and little Bess Decker; but that is a debt I can't offer to pay."

"Then I'll say that you have hired a hand, Mr. King. There's a little matter I want to clean up before I go. It will take me two or three days. Will next week be soon enough to start?"

"That will be fine. I think we'll both be satisfied." King looked up at his daughter, who had just appeared in the doorway. "You might shake hands, Janet, with the new foreman of the Big Bend ranch."

Janet offered her father's employee a small firm sun-browned hand.

"I'm so glad," she said.

"I hope you won't be sorry," he replied.

"He's a respectable citizen now—no more helling around," King observed.

"The repentant sinner we were talking about the other day, Miss Janet," added Blake.

THE ranchman looked at his strong brown face, all the weakness of youth ironed out of it—took in the lean and well-knit body, lithe and graceful as that of a panther.

"Better ask him for supper, Janet. I have a lot to talk over yet with this young man."

"You will stay, won't you, Mr. Forrest?" invited the girl. "We'd all be glad to have you."

He hesitated. "I sort of promised the boys at the cook shack—"

"We have fatted calf, prepared especially for prodigal sons," she broke in. "And anyhow, Bess would never forgive us if we didn't keep you here. So that's settled."

She turned swiftly and went her light-footed way through the door.

"Sit down again, Forrest," his employer said. "Want to talk over with you the Big Bend lay-out. There's an enormous lot of thieving going on down in that country. Mexicans running wet stock across the river. Raids across the border and counter-raids. Outlaws on the dodge in the brush and helping themselves right and left. I read in the Galveston *News* the other day that there are now seven hundred fifty warrants out in Texas for horse-thieves, and that counts only the known ones. Up here we are comparatively honest, but down along the border it's grab what you can. This is a man-size job I'm offering. Outside of Captain McNelly's rangers, who have to cover half of West Texas, Judge Colt is all the law there is. Not one man in a thousand could do what I'm asking you to do, and that is to make money for me and stay alive yourself."

"Maybe I'd be safer locked up in the penitentiary," Forrest said, with a grin.

"I've a notion it's the other guys who won't be safe," King told him. . . . "Want to wash up for supper?"

CRAIG SHANNON and Blake Forrest dismounted at the hitch-rack in front of the Valley Bank. The younger man untied the saddlebags and flung them over his left arm. Together they walked into the bank.

Two men were in sight. Homer Packard, behind the cage, was cashing a check for the owner of the largest saloon in town. At sight of Forrest, the cashier forgot what he was doing.

"You—again!" he gasped.

Blake smiled, pleasantly. "Like to have a little talk with Mr. Gildea," he said. "Is he in his office?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then we'll just walk in and surprise him. He'll be glad to see us."

He started for the door of the inner office, but stopped at an abrupt hoarse summons from the cashier.

"Put up your hands—quick! Or I'll shoot the daylights out of you."

Through the bars of the cage the barrel of an unsteady revolver protruded. Blake grinned. "My goodness, Craig," he drawled, "this is a hold-up! The young man aims to rob us."

Shannon did not throw up his hands, either. He snapped, sharply, "Don't be a fool, Packard," and added: "We're here on legitimate business."

The saloonkeeper dryly gave the cashier advice. "I reckon you better put yore popgun up, Homer. Mr. Shannon

hasn't took to sticking up banks for a living."

The bank clerk withdrew the gun, uncertainly. "I wasn't talking to Mr. Shannon," he explained, the color slowly beating back into his face.

Blake looked around, as if to see who else was present. "Must have been me he meant. You hadn't ought to be so abrupt with the customers of the bank, Homer. I've come to make a deposit."

He opened the door of the office and walked into the room. Shannon followed him and closed the door.

The small piggy eyes of Gildea lifted from the document he was reading and instantly registered alarm. "What you doing here?" he demanded, his voice shrill. "Get out o' here, you fool! You can't do it twice and get away with it."

FORREST put the saddlebags on the desk. He unstrapped the fastenings and lifted some canvas sacks from them.

"No need getting excited, Mr. Gildea," he suggested. "I've come to make a little deposit in the bank. Like to have you count it. I make the total six thousand four hundred and twenty-two dollars."

Suspiciously Gildea watched him empty the money from the sacks.

"Are you in this, Shannon?" the banker snarled.

"Merely as a witness, Jake. Blake wanted a friend along so that there wouldn't be any mistake as to what had taken place. I was glad to come."

"Well, what the hell *is* taking place?" demanded Gildea. "If he thinks he can deposit this money in my bank, he's wrong. I won't take it from the scoundrel."

"Maybe it would be a good idea not to decide that until you've heard Blake's proposition," the cattleman said.

"I'm not interested in any of his propositions. He robbed me of this money and got away with it before a fat-headed jury. I won't have any more dealings with him. None whatever. That's flat." And Gildea slammed a fist on the desk.

"Now, suppose we count the money," Blake said quietly. "I'm not expecting you to deposit this money in my name, Gildea. I'm bringing it back to you for private reasons of my own. You'd not understand them. Not necessary you should. The point is, you get the mazuma, and that's all you care about."

"You mean you're giving me back this money?" the banker shrilled.

"You've got the idea. You're a heartless thief and always will be. I haven't any more respect for you than for a side-winder. But I'm bringing back to you the same dough that I took. Now get busy counting it. I don't like to breathe the same air as you any longer than is necessary."

Gildea counted the gold and the notes. "You want a receipt for this?" he asked.

"Yes. Send for Packard and turn this over to him. Both of you will sign the receipt."

Five minutes later Forrest and his friend walked out of the bank.

"I'm not sure yet I wasn't a fool for taking the money back," the younger man said with a wry grin. "He owed it to me, with compound interest added."

"He owed it to you, but that wasn't the right way to collect." Shannon slanted a puzzled inquiring look at him. "What made you take it back, Blake?"

Forrest knew why, but he did not tell him. That was strictly his own rather shamefaced concern.

"You're a fine rooster," jeered Shannon, intent on stirring up a reply. "Damn my buttons, if you make sense. To get that money you take a chance of working for the State of Texas ten or fifteen years; then when you're sitting pretty, you turn it back to that old vinegarroon instead of living at the top of the pot with it."

"No trouble to make a case out against me as a prize lunkhead," Blake admitted cheerfully.

CHAPTER XVIII

JANET walked into her father's office with a newspaper in her hand.

"Have you read this piece about Blake Forrest?" she asked. "The one that tells of his taking the money back to the bank?"

Curtis King reached for the paper. "No, I haven't. Let's see it." He read:

> A strange last chapter has been written in the Valley Bank case of alleged robbery. Today Blake Forrest, who was recently acquitted at Fair Play of holding up the bank, walked into the office of Jacob Gildea and turned over to him six thousand four hundred and twenty-two dollars, the exact sum he was charged with taking.
>
> It appears that the whole trouble arose from a misunderstanding as to whether

"I've thought of you eversince, day and night," he said. "Before I go, I'll have to tell you—I've had no better sense than to fall in love with you."

Mr. Gilden wanted Forrest to have this sum in payment of an old debt said to have been due. Finding that this was not the case, the accused man returned to the bank the amount in dispute. The affair is now closed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The cattleman gave a whoop of jubilation. "Bully for Forrest! That starts him right again. I'm sure pleased to read this."

"So am I." A faint glow of crimson streamed into her cheeks below the tan. "I have to tell you something, Father. When we spoke about it before, I told you I didn't love him and that I wouldn't marry him if he was the last man in the world. That's not true, though I didn't know it then. I'll marry Blake Forrest—or I'll never marry."

He frowned at her, his keen eyes searching her face. "Has he asked you?"

Her eyes were as steady as his. "No. He has never said a word to lead me to believe that he cares anything for me. I'm just shameless—hoping he'll ask me, and afraid he won't."

Nobody looking at the immobile face of the cattleman could have guessed how proud he was of his daughter's spirit. He knew that back of the radiant vigor there was an inner beauty fine and rare.

"I'm sorry about this, Janet," he said quietly. "It's bad enough to fall in love with a man who doesn't care for you, let alone one whose whole life proves he wouldn't be a good husband."

"Why wouldn't he be a good husband? You've just said that returning the money starts him right."

"It isn't that I don't like him," King said gently. "I don't know any young man I admire more. But I wouldn't choose him as the man for you to marry. The woods are filled with his enemies."

"And with his friends," she cut in. "Not colorless fair-weather friends, but men devoted to him through thick and thin."

"Yes. He draws men to him, I'll admit that. He has plenty of character—of a kind. But he is a marked man. Some day he will have to kill again or be killed. There would be little happiness for his wife."

"All women marry on a chance."

King paced the floor, greatly disturbed. "I'm afraid you're laying up grief for yourself, daughter. But I wouldn't stand in your way—if you are sure you love him."

"That's fine!" And she smiled bravely. "Now I have only to get his consent!"

"Keep back, fellow," shrieked the rider. "Or I'll pump lead into you."

Forrest unsaddled, put his horse in the pasture, and reported at the big house. His employer met him a little stiffly, with a feeling of hostility the cattleman himself knew to be unfair.

"Ready to take off for the Big Bend ranch?" King asked curtly.

"Yes sir. Tomorrow morning."

"Good enough. Come up after supper, and I'll talk things over with you. I've been thinking about getting some imported bulls. Whiteface, I reckon."

"I'll be up, sir. Like to get off early and make it in a day if I can." Blake offered a suggestion. "If you can spare me Stone Heath, I'd like to have him on the Big Bend ranch. He's a man I know and can trust. It would be nice to have him back of me on this job."

"That will be all right. I'll send him down in a week or two with supplies."

King rose from his chair. Blake felt that he had been dismissed.

SINCE Forrest was leaving early in the morning, Janet waited shamelessly in the shadow of the porch to meet him "accidentally" after he should leave her father's office. She heard the drone of their voices a long time before there came to her the sound of a chair being pushed back. Presently the figure of the new Big Bend ranch foreman bulked in the doorway.

Janet moved forward a step or two, and he caught sight of her.

"I've been hoping to meet you," he said. "Is there somewhere we can talk —alone?"

"I want to get a letter off tonight. One of the boys would take it to Midway, but if you wouldn't mind riding with me—"

It was a daring suggestion, for that time and place. No unchaperoned young woman could ride out into the desert at night with a young man, except at the risk of starting talk.

Without an instant's hesitation Blake said: "I'll catch and saddle, Miss King."

"Black Hawk is in the pasture. You'll find my side saddle on the south side of the barn, fourth from the end. I'll meet you there in fifteen minutes."

Janet went into the little room where her father was still sitting.

"I'm going down to Midway to mail a letter, Father," she said. "With Blake Forrest."

"Do you think that wise?" he asked.

"We spent a night together alone on the desert," she reminded him.

Curtis King threw up his hands. "All right. All right. Don't be out too late. He'll come to the house here for you, I reckon."

"I said I'd meet him at the stable."

"No. Start from here. I'll be on the porch and see you off myself.'"

"That would be better," she nodded. "Thanks, Father."

Curtis King helped his daughter to the saddle. His hard eyes met those of Forrest. "I'll expect you back by ten-thirty," he said.

"We'll be on time," Blake replied.

IT was a night of countless stars. The moon suffused the desert, softening its harsh details to a vague and magic loveliness. They rode knee to knee, in silence, for a time.

"I've been to Rosedale since I saw you last," Blake said presently. "I called on Jake Gildea and took him back his money."

"I saw it in the Rosedale *Herald*," she answered, "I'm glad."

"You told me two wrongs do not make a right. I didn't want to see it that way. But—I had to give in."

She brushed back an escaping tendril of soft hair, to get rid of the sudden telltale moisture that filled her eyes. "You've turned over that new leaf."

"Yes. The crazy days are dead." The old sardonic smile touched his lips. "I'm for law and order, and peace—and I'm going down into a country where I'll have to pack a gun every minute, and use it sometimes."

"I wish you weren't going," she said. "It—it isn't fair to send you down there—into that lawless country—now of all times, when you're just starting to—"

Blake tossed her argument aside. "Nothing to that. A man has to do his job. Rustlers must be checked or honest people will have to leave the country. I'm glad to go. It's a great chance."

"You'll be careful?"

He did not hear what she had said. His mind was on something else, the gulf that separated them, the lawless years that had made him what he was and the quiet gentle ones that had fixed her character. Yet, desperately conscious of them, he deliberately broke down the dam his will had built.

"I've thought of you ever since I left, day and night," he said, his voice low and rough with feeling. "I can't get you out of my mind. When I try, you keep crowding back. Before I go I have to tell you that—I've had no better sense than to fall in love with you."

The tumult of a joyous song flooded her being. "I have thought of you too," she said softly. "Day and night."

"How have you thought of me?" he demanded. "As a brand snatched from the burning, a reclaimed sinner you've done your Christian duty for?"

"You never were a sinner to me."

He swung from the saddle and lifted her to the ground. His hungry gaze searched the young face raised to his, and found in it shy yet eager surrender. He drew her into his arms. . . .

Slowly they rode back to the ranch-house, neither of them remembering that they had not mailed the letter.

Curtis King was waiting for them. He heard the news with an imperturbable face, but it was none the less a relief to him. One look at the radiant countenance of Janet told him that for the hour at least she was supremely happy.

"We want to be married at once," Blake explained. "I know that is hurrying things, but our idea is for Janet to go down to the ranch with me now."

"Have it your own way," King said. "You're not the man I would have picked for Janet, Forrest. But maybe she knows what she wants better than I do. I'll say this: If you don't know you're getting a girl out of ten thousand, you're a plumb fool."

CHAPTER XIX

THEY were married. They drove down to the Spur ranch, stopping a couple of days at a hotel in San Antonio. From here they headed the buckboard south to their new domain.

At Granite Gap the conditions of life had been comfortable and pleasant. The ranch was within reach of a railroad, and even luxuries could be obtained if desired. But as they pushed through the brush in the direction of the border, Janet realized that they were moving into a pioneer world and every mile was carrying them farther from civilization.

But she was too happy to let material hardships affect her spirits. She sewed curtains for the small diamond-shaped portholes which served for windows in her new home, and she cooked on a Dutch oven as if she had been used to nothing else all her life. She and Blake found it easy to laugh together, for they were in a rose-colored world of youth and love.

"It won't be for long," he promised. "Ellison is leaving at the end of next week. Then I'll be the 'big boss,' and we'll move up to his house. It's very

comfortable—not exactly what you've been used to, but a lot better than this."

As the weeks and the months rolled along Janet discovered that her volcanic man was always gentle and considerate. None the less she could see that his word was law. From the Mexican cook she heard the details of an encounter that fixed his supremacy once for all. A huge vile-tempered scoundrel called Buck Spelvin had ruled the bunk-house. Even Ellison had walked cannily round him. When Forrest took over, he knew the man was a creator of trouble, but he waited patiently, overlooking more than one affront, to choose an occasion that suited him, to assert his authority.

IT came about a week after Ellison left. At a night camp-fire Spelvin drew a gun on a harmless young Mexican rider who had accidentally tripped over his foot and spilled some coffee on him.

"Put up that gun, Buck," Forrest ordered, his voice low but clear.

"Maybe you can make me," the ruffian sneered, jumping to his feet.

"Maybe I can," the foreman answered.

Every man around that camp-fire knew a challenge had been given and accepted.

Forrest rose in one swift lithe movement, his gaze fixed on the enemy. He made no motion toward the revolver in the holster at his hip.

"Better put it up, Buck," he suggested again, evenly, but with cold authority ringing through the words.

"Not on yore tintype, Mr. Foreman," the ruffian growled. "My gun's waiting right here ready for business. If you want any of my game, come a-smokin'."

Blake recalled the advice of the Lieutenant of rangers under whom he had first served: "When you start for a bad man, son, keep going. You've got an edge on him because you're inside the law and he is out. Nine times out of ten, he'll throw in his hand and quit."

All of which might be true, but it was small comfort to think this might be the tenth. As Forrest moved forward with the light strong stride that characterized him, he realized that the crook of a finger would send him to eternity.

"No occasion to go crazy with the heat, Buck," he drawled. "Can't have my boys shooting each other up, and I won't. Put that cutter back in its holster before you make a mistake." In his voice there was complete assurance. His eyes bored into the blustering bully.

"Keep back, fellow," shrieked the rider. "Keep back, or by God, I'll pump lead into you."

"No, you won't," the foreman corrected. "You'll turn that .44 over to me."

Blake held out his right hand as he approached. The other man drew back.

"Don't you come a foot nearer," he yelled. "Not a foot."

"That's no way to talk," Forrest remonstrated quietly. "When I say, 'Give me the gun,' I mean—"

He stopped. The time for words was passed. Out went Blake's left, all the drive of his plunging body back of it.

In his uncertain English the Mexican cook had recounted to Janet the swift dénouement.

"The big boss he jump—queek, oh, very queek. His feest land smack, like the keeck of a mule, on Buck's jaw. And Buck, he roll over and lie steel. The big boss say, 'Get his gun, Stone,' and walk back to the fire. That is all, señora. Except that Buck, he saddle his bronco and beat it *muy pronto*." Pedro laughed, savoring in memory his pleasure at the cool efficiency of the new foreman. "Then the big boss he sing, like he do sometimes, and the vaqueros they theenk: 'Here is the man for us at last.'"

Janet liked the enthusiasm of the cook. She shared it herself.

"What did he sing?" she asked, smiling at the pockmarked little Mexican.

"He sing, señora, about dry bones in a valley."

Later in the day Pedro heard his mistress singing the same song, in her lilting untrained contralto.

"Dry bones in the valley,
I really do believe.
Dry bones in the valley;
Oh, some of them bones are mine.

Some come a-cripple,
Some come a-lame,
Some of them bones are mine.
Some come a-walking with a hickory cane,
Some of them bones are mine."

Even though she found life in the primitive brush country a never-ending joy, Janet devoured eagerly all the letters that came from the family she had left at the Granite Gap ranch. Newspapers came to them seldom, since they had to travel fifty miles to get the very irregular mail. It was in a letter from Bill Crabb that they read a piece of news which interested them both:

"Raiders," he gasped. "Juan Cuero's band—headin' for the Spur."

I take my pen in hand, old-timer, to let you know the latest news about them dere friends of yours, the dad-gummed Terrell outfit. Well sir, Robinson got a conviksun against all five of the skunks, and Judge Jackman he got real generous with their time and handed them a fifteen-year jolt. No kick coming from anyone. You will not be plesed to hear that on the way back to jail, Wes Terrell shot Buzz Waggoner and the whole caboodle eskaped. Somebody had sliped Wes a gun. The doc says Buzz will make the grade. Nobody knows where the Terrells have lit out to. Some say Arizona. Well, Arizona is welcome to them, I say.

When do you aim to send for me, you blamed old vinegarroon? Since you and Stone have gone, this country has got awful tame. Don't seem like the men have any guts or the women any jingle. I'll be down there riding the chuck-line if you don't give a job to that old top-rider,

yore friend,
Bill Crabb

"I'll write him tomorrow," Blake said.

Bill arrived three weeks later with a wagonload of supplies and a sack full of letters, newspapers and books.

CHAPTER XX

THE cow business in that lower country was a precarious and uncertain one. Rustlers hung on the outskirts of big outfits; and another source of peril were the raiders from Mexico. In the dark of the moon it was an easy enterprise to cross the Rio Grande, round up a bunch of fat stock, and swim them over the river for sale to new owners. Against these foes, as well as the natural ones of flood, drought and blizzards, Forrest and his men waged incessant warfare, for the rangers and the cattlemen enforced occasional rough justice. Outlaws were run down, and shot or hanged without benefit of judge or jury.

When Blake Forrest returned after one of these punitive expeditions—sometimes undertaken by the Spur outfit alone and sometimes with the help of rangers or other stockmen—he never talked to Janet of what had taken place. His duties took him away from the home ranch a great deal, and during the round-up of cattle for the trail-drive, she would not see him for weeks at a time. She was expecting a baby soon, and she missed him tremendously. But it was the lot of pioneer mothers to be much alone, she knew; and she met him when he came, with gay and cheerful accounts of what had taken place in his absence.

Coming home for one of his flying visits, he told her a piece of news that had reached him. A stranger had drifted into the cow-camp, and had dropped the casual information that he had spent the night recently with the Terrell gang.

"He met four of them—the two Terrells, Lake and Walsh, I'd guess from his description of them. His opinion is that they are operating in stolen horses."

Janet's heart seemed to stand still a moment. "You don't think they will—start anything?" she asked.

"If you're worried about me, sugar, you can forget it," he said cheerfully,

a strong arm round her shoulders. "I reckon I'm about the last man in this part of the country they want to meet. They don't aim to stir up a hornet's nest that will set McNelly's rangers on their tails."

"They might waylay you."

He shook his head decisively. "No chance. I'm with a big crew most of the time. They'll steer clear of us. When I'm riding the brush alone, they won't have any way of knowing where I'll be. . . . There's something else I want to talk about with you. I can't get off just now myself, but I want to send you back with Stone Heath to the Granite Gap until after the baby is born. I know you don't want to go, but—"

"I don't want to go, and there's no need of it. All the time I was away I would be unhappy. We can get Doctor Broderick at any time inside of two hours. I'll do far better here than I would at the Granite Gap. As I told you, I've had a letter from Helen Decker. I think she would be glad to come down and stay for a long visit. She is good company, and it would be nice to have her."

"If you can get her to come I won't insist on your going north," Blake compromised. "Better write her tomorrow."

CHAPTER XXI

Blake King Forrest lay in his crib, waved in the air fat pink bowed legs, and chortled happily at Helen Decker, who was making funny faces for his amusement. Janet smiled at the performance. The young women were alone in the house, for Blake had left that morning to join his men at the round-up and would not be back for several days.

"Some riders coming up the road," Helen mentioned. "Quite a delegation. Four—five—six of them."

Janet watched the approaching horsemen. They were white men, not Mexicans, and she was surprised to see so many, for just at this time all available males were busy with the beef round-up.

They dismounted at the bunk-house, and Stone Heath came out to speak with them. Outside of Pedro, he was the only man left at the home ranch.

Helen frowned. "Two of them are Wes and Ray Terrell," she said. "I didn't know they were in this part of the country. Haven't heard anything about them since they wounded Mr. Waggoner and escaped."

"Yes, and another one is a man who rode for us. His name is Buck Spelvin. He is a hard case. Blake had to get rid of him. . . . They're coming to the house now."

Heath walked beside the leading horses. He called to Janet: "These men are out of grub, Mrs. Forrest, and would like to get some from us."

"I didn't know you were down here in the border country," Helen said to her cousin Ray, without friendliness.

"You got nothing on us, Cousin Helen," he replied. "We didn't know you were here either."

"Please don't call me cousin," she told him tartly. "I haven't any kin who rob trains and have to hole up in the brush."

"She and that skim-milk brother of hers throw down on folks when their luck is out, and play in with the family enemies," Wes Terrell snarled.

"Please—please! Let's not have trouble," Janet begged.

"We won't, Mrs. Forrest. We're not making trouble for ladies."

Webb Lake swept off his hat as he spoke. Even though he had ridden far through the dusty chaparral he contrived to look immaculately clean.

"Unless they devil us into it," Wes Terrell added harshly.

"No *if* about it," Lake said firmly. "You and your family are quite safe, Mrs. Forrest. We are here, madam, to ask the favor of buying some provisions from you. Don't be alarmed, please. Under no circumstances would we do you the least harm. The bark of the boys is a lot worse than their bite."

Janet took instant comfort. Her instinct told her that this quiet little man with the cold slaty eyes was to be trusted. He might be a scoundrel, but he was a clean one.

"You can have what you want," Janet said. She turned to Heath. "Stone, you know where the key to the storehouse is. Will you serve Mr. Lake and his friends?"

Webb Lake looked down with interest at the three-months-old infant in the cradle and snapped his fingers. The baby wriggled joyfully and chortled at the man. Janet picked up her son, preparatory to walking into the house. Moved by some wise instinct, she handed the child to the outlaw.

"He's very fond of men," she said. "See how he takes to you at once."

The man was embarrassed but pleased. "The little codger sure has taken a

strangle-hold on my finger," he said. "He's a mighty husky boy for his age, ma'am. Looks a lot like you."

Pres Walsh's ugly lip curled. "Maybe you could get a job in the nursery, Webb," he suggested.

Janet retrieved her baby. "See that Mr. Lake gets what he needs, Stone," she said to Heath, as she went inside.

AT the store Heath waited on the customers. It was not usual for the Spur ranch to sell supplies to outsiders, but in a country so sparsely settled it was only neighborly to let strangers purchase necessities occasionally. The present visitors bought flour, bacon, beans, meal, coffee, sugar, salt and other staples; but when it came to paying for them, Wesley Terrell's thin-lipped slit of a mouth stretched to a grin. "Put it on the hook, Stone," he said. "We're all good friends of yore boss. He'll be glad to know he has accommodated us."

"This is supposed to be a cash on the barrel-head deal, Wes," Heath said.

"Not for such close pals as we are," Walsh replied derisively.

Mildly the Spur rider stuck to his point. "Blake won't like it, boys. This ranch doesn't run a general store. My advice would be for you to settle now."

"Who cares about yore advice?" Wes Terrell wanted to know.

"Fact is, Heath, we're a little short of funds right now," Lake explained. "Dollars don't grow on mesquite bushes."

The six riders presently departed, their saddlebags laden with parcels and sacks of provisions tied on behind. At the corral they stopped while Walsh roped a buckskin gelding that took his fancy.

Stone reported to Janet, with bitter self-criticism. "I'm a fine guy to leave in charge," he said. "To let a bunch of scalawags ride off with a first-class cow-pony and about seventy-five dollars' worth of grub. Blake will like that fine."

"You did exactly right," Janet told him. "We got rid of them pretty cheaply, it seems to me. The last thing Blake would want would be for you to have any trouble with them here."

Helen Decker's tawny eyes smoldered with anger. "To think that two of them are my cousins—just common thieves."

Stone Heath looked at this red-headed girl, so vivid and so violent, and there was nothing impersonal in that gaze.

"We're not responsible for scalawags who happen to have the same folks we do," he said.

"SOME one coming up the road hell-for-leather," Buck Spelvin said, and drew up his mount.

His companions stopped, watching horse and rider.

"He's sure whipped out—him and his fuzzy both," Ray Terrell commented. "Something wrong with him, the way he's hanging to the horn."

That the man was desperately sick all of them could see. He pulled his spent pony to a halt and clung with both hands to the pommel, body swaying. On the man's shirt, not far below the heart, was a wet red stain.

"Raiders," he gasped. "Juan Cuero's band—headin' for the Spur."

Walsh and Lake swung from their saddles in time to catch him as he slid down. They put him on the ground, his head pillowed on Lake's arm.

The eyes of the wounded man fluttered open. "They got me—at Sibley's ford—"

His head fell forward. "He's gone," said Walsh after a moment. "Heart's quit."

"Anybody know him?" Wes Terrell asked.

None of them did.

"He must of knew the Spur riders were at the round-up and was trying to warn Mrs. Forrest," Schrader guessed.

"Looks like," agreed Wes Terrell. His anxious eyes slid down the road. Beads of perspiration had broken out on his forehead. "Cuero never rides with less than twenty-thirty men. We better be lighting out, boys. If they're making for the Spur, they'll be along right soon." He walked swiftly to his horse.

"Damned soon," agreed Spelvin. "I aim to ooze into the brush *pronto*."

LAKE rose to his feet. "Just a minute, boys. There are women and a baby at the Spur. Do you aim to leave them at the mercy of Cuero?"

"You can ride and warn them if you feel thataway, Webb," answered Wes Terrell harshly. Fear had wiped the strength out of his flabby face.

The cold eyes in Webb's pallid face blazed. "Warning them is not enough, you yellow wolf! Likely they won't have time to saddle. We've got to fight for them."

"For Blake Forrest's ranch and family? Not on yore life! It's every man for himself now. I'm lookin' out for Wes Terrell."

"Our cousin is there with Janet," Ray said to his brother, his face paling.

"She done told you half an hour ago she is no kin of ours," Wes flung back, almost in a panic—it was said Cuero and his men were no better than Apaches. "She made the choice, not us."

Lake cut into the argument. "No time for talk. Some one has to get word to Forrest. Luke, you do that. Ride like a prairie fire was after you. Me, I'm burning the wind for the Spur. Those of you who are men will take my dust. The rest can go to hell."

Already Schrader had started on his errand. Lake mounted, swung his horse, and jumped it to a canter.

Buck Spelvin ripped out an ugly oath. "I'm just blamed fool enough to back Lake's play," he said, jeering at himself.

Walsh and Wes Terrell turned into the brush. "Come on, Ray," the latter called over his shoulder.

As Ray pulled himself to the saddle, he made his choice: His horse galloped down the road after Spelvin's bay.

At the end of a long stretch rising to the brow of a small hill Ray turned his head again. Far back on the yellow ribbon strip of road rose a cloud of dust.

The ranch-house was just ahead of him. He saw Lake leap to the ground and drag a rifle from its boot beside the saddle. Already he had shouted a warning to Stone Heath, and that young man was running into the house.

Stone stopped, to snap an order at Pedro, who had just emerged from the kitchen. "Cuero's raiders headed this way. Get yore gun. Fill a box with grub and take it to the fort house."

"We'll need water, Buck, plenty of it—for a siege." Lake's voice rang crisp and sharp. "I saw their dust as I came over the hill. What weapons are at the ranch I'll gather."

"Can't we all get away," Ray Terrell asked, "riding double?"

"Too late. Turn your horse loose. You won't need him. Help Buck with the food and water."

Lake plunged into the house. Already Janet was snatching the baby from the crib. Helen Decker was at the other side of the room. She had just lifted a rifle from its rack on the wall.

"How close are they?" Janet asked. Her lips were colorless, but there was no quaver in the voice.

"We have just time to fort up," Lake answered quietly. "Don't be frightened. We'll stand 'em off."

Stone Heath came into the room carrying a rifle and a revolver. A belt of ammunition hung over his arm.

"Everybody to the fort house," he cried. "Get a jump on you."

THE fort house was the original ranch dwelling. Here Forrest and his bride had lived until Ellison vacated the larger house for them. It had been built to withstand Indian attacks. The walls of upright split logs, the small diamond-shaped windows, the sod roof, had all been designed to make the place as nearly invulnerable as possible. The door was of heavy oak supported by great iron bolts stretching from below each hinge to the opposite jamb. In front and in back of the two-room cabin there was no brush or cover of any kind for a hundred yards except that afforded by an old smokehouse and a root-cellar.

Toward the fort house the men and women now hurried. Janet carried her baby and his bedding. The others were laden with weapons, food, buckets of water, and blankets.

"Any wood?" Lake asked.

"I packed some in yesterday," Heath replied. "It's where I sleep."

"They're coming," Helen cried.

All of them knew it. None of them had been moving too fast for frequent swift glances at the brow of the hill where the raiders must first appear. They came over it at a gallop, a long—seemingly endless—stream of them.

"We're holed up just in time," Heath said imperturbably. "All in, boys! Careful about splashing that water, Ray—we may need it all."

One of the raiders caught sight of them and raised a shout. Bullets sprayed the walls and the ground about them.

"Hurry, Stone," Helen cried.

Heath came in, slammed the door, and bolted it.

"First thing I learned about Mexicans from my dad was that they can't shoot straight," he said contemptuously.

"We won't bank on that too heavily," Lake said. "Where is the safest place for the ladies?"

"We're holed up just in time," Heath said imperturbably. "All in, boys!"

Already Pedro was working at the puncheon floor. He edged up a loose corner, got his fingers underneath, and lifted a square section which served as a trapdoor. Below this were steps which led down into a cellar.

He went down first, to make sure no snakes had found a den there.

"We'd better each take a loophole so as to cover all four sides of the house," Heath suggested. "Pedro can load our guns for us when we get busy."

"I can help do that," Helen said. "Behind these walls I'd be perfectly safe, and I'm not going to sit down there in a cellar all the time."

She was looking at Heath, a little defiantly. He smiled at her.

"That's the spirit, Miss Helen," he told her. "We'll sure call on you when you're needed. Till then I reckon we men-folks would feel easier if you'd get down where a bullet couldn't reach you."

Her eyelashes fell before his steady gaze. "All right. I'll do as I'm told. But they are not firing just now. I want to speak to Cousin Ray."

Helen walked across to Terrell. He was standing on a stool at one of the lozenge-shaped openings, a rifle in hand.

"Where is Wes?" she asked.

Ray felt a queer flush of shame running through him. "He—didn't come."

"But you came, Cousin Ray."

"I felt I had to come, Helen."

She nodded, her steady gaze on this man who had always been the least consequential of the Terrell clan. "I want to tell you how ashamed I am of what I said. Maybe—maybe we won't get out of here. Will you forgive me and shake hands?"

"Nothing to forgive. All you said was true. We've turned out a pretty poor lot." He stepped down from the stool. "Sure I'll shake hands. Glad to do it. I always thought a heap of you."

He offered his hand. She took it, then suddenly leaned forward and kissed him.

INTO the camp at Buck Creek a man pounded heavily on a weary mount. The cook looked up from the potatoes he was peeling to watch this crazy rider's approach.

"Where's Blake Forrest?" the man in the saddle croaked from a dust-filled throat.

"At the cow hunt—over on Dutch Flat." The cook looked at the heaving

horse and said severely: "Yore bronc won't ever be worth a damn, if it lives."

"Cuero's raiders are headin' for the Spur ranch," the messenger announced. "Get horses—quick."

"Goddlemighty! Whyn't you say so?" The cook woke to instant activity. He snatched up a rope and loped across the flat toward three or four hobbled horses.

Luke Schrader slid to the ground, unfastened his own rope, and followed the cook.

"Take the blue," the Spur man shouted. "He's faster than the sorrel."

Within five minutes they were galloping across a rolling prairie as fast as their mounts could travel. It was half an hour later that the cook gestured.

"There they are—right below us."

A man was chousing a wild-eyed steer out of the thicket. The cook rode forward and intercepted him. "Where's the boss, Lem?" he called.

"'Lo, Sam! What you doing here? He's right over the hill with the gather."

"Cuero is raidin' the ranch. Get the boys together. Come on, you." The last words were shot at Schrader over the cook's shoulder.

FORREST heard the news in grim tight-lipped fear, but he wasted no time in indecision.

"Rope my claybank, Mac—fast as you can," he told the nearest rider. To Crabb, orders crackled out sharply. "Round up the boys already in from the brush. Leave somebody here to pick up the others later. Don't wait for them. Cut across to the camp and pick up what rifles are there. Then get to the ranch fast as you can."

He turned, striding toward the *remuda*. No use wasting energy in running, since it would take Mac a minute or two to rope and saddle his mount. Schrader walked alongside, carrying on the story.

"Heath won't be alone. Webb Lake and a couple of the boys pulled out for the ranch soon as we heard the greasers had crossed the river and were makin' for the Spur."

"Sure of that? How did you hear it?"

"Met a man wounded by Cuero's devils. He was alive and no more, hanging to the horn. They got him at Sibley's Ford. 'Most as soon as we got him to the ground he died."

"Did he say how many men Cuero had with him?"

"No. Hadn't time. Passed on too soon. But I looked back from a hill and saw the raiders pouring down the road. A big bunch of them."

"Who went with Lake?"

"Buck Spelvin, for one. I dunno for sure who the other was. Not Wes Terrell. He said he was saving his own hide. Say, pick me a fast horse and I'll side you."

"See Mac about it. I can't wait."

Mac was cinching the saddle on the claybank when the foreman reached him.

"Give me your six-shooter, Mac," Blake told the man. "You can get another at the camp on your way to the ranch."

He vaulted to the saddle and jumped his horse to a gallop. He went out of sight as if fired from a gun.

A tenderfoot devoured by anxiety as was Blake might have decided that his problem was to get his horse in a straight line between two points at the greatest possible speed. The foreman of the Spur knew better than that. By carelessness he could easily founder the claybank. He had to get the maximum speed consistent with saving enough stamina to cover the necessary miles. This required a nice judgment. Moreover, about halfway between him and home lay the Buchanan ranch. Would he gain time by detouring for a mile to pick up a fresh horse?

The sun began to slide down toward the western horizon. The long reaching stride of the claybank had eaten up many miles, but Blake knew he had been asking too much of the horse. It was very weary. Better turn off to the Quarter-circle M B and pick up a mount from Buchanan. But before he had traveled the cut-off to the ranch more than a few hundred yards he met a cowboy.

"By gum, if it aint Mr. Forrest," the towheaded youth was beginning when Blake cut him short abruptly. The words that issued from the dust-caked throat were almost a croak.

"Give me that horse. And ride back to Buchanan. Tell him Cuero's raiders are at the Spur, and for him to gather what men he can, quick as God will let him. My boys are on the way from the cow hunt."

HE swung to the saddle the line-rider had vacated and gave the horse a touch of the spur.

"Hey, you aint going on alone," the cowboy shouted after him. But the Spur foreman already was disappearing round a bend in the road. . . .

Cuero made no immediate attempt to capture the fort house at the Spur ranch. He had not crossed the river to fight but to loot, to destroy, and to drive back with him as many horses and cattle as he could collect.

He had turned loose his men to enjoy themselves. Some of them had broken open the store and were helping themselves to ammunition, knives, tobacco, clothes and food. Others were tearing through the house, smashing furniture, ripping up bedding, breaking windows.

A few random shots tore into the walls of the fort house. Some drunken raiders rode up even to the door and beat upon it defiantly. Those inside had an easy chance to mow down these careless aggressors, but did not take advantage of it.

"No sense in us r'arin' up and making them mad before we have to," Heath advised. "The more time they fool away at the store and the big house, the better for us. Before they go, they'll give us plenty of trouble, but if they wait too long, we may have help from the boys at the cow hunt."

Lake nodded, grimly. "Hope they decide to have a bonfire and burn the big house. Anything to keep them too busy to tackle us in earnest."

STONE HEATH turned his post over to Pedro temporarily and went down the ladder to the cellar. A lighted candle had been stuck into the dirt on a kind of shelf in the wall.

"How's every little thing doing down here?" he asked cheerfully. "Doesn't seem to be much going on upstairs with us. The greasers are busy looting the storehouse and ripping things up at the house. I hate to mention, Miss Helen, that one of them is prancing around in that blue silk dress of yours."

"You think maybe they'll leave without attacking us here?" Janet asked.

"No can tell. I figure they'll try to rush us before they go, but when we stand them off and make it cost them plenty, Cuero is likely to give it up as not worth while."

He spoke a good deal more confidently than he felt.

"There are only five of you, and there must be a hundred of them," Janet said.

"But we're forted up, with plenty of ammunition, and they're in the open. All we got to do is to hold the fort till Blake comes busting in with the boys. . . . How is young Blake King Forrest making out?"

Stone strolled across to Janet, took the baby from her arms, and danced him gently up and down until he wriggled with delight. The cowboy's laugh was easy and care-free. "Young fellow, when you hear the firecrackers poppin', don't you get scared. Remember we're having a kinda special Fourth of July, kindness of Señor Juan Cuero."

BOTH Helen and Janet knew his nonchalance was assumed; nothing would please these raiders more than to wipe out a few helpless gringoes; and if they made a determined attack, the odds would be too great for the defenders.

As he was leaving, Helen said quietly: "I'll be up there if you need me."

He smiled, looking at her steadily. "I don't reckon I'll need you upstairs, but I'll certainly need you a lot later."

Her eyes did not waver. "When you need me, I'll come, Stone."

Heath went up the steps three at a time.

"Cuero is calling his men together," Buck Spelvin told Heath as the latter reappeared. "Getting ready for to rush us, looks like."

From a cow-horn a bugler sounded the recall and the raiders straggled back from house and store, carrying their loot. Cuero talked to them, with excited gestures, waving a hand toward the fort house repeatedly. Shouts from his followers interrupted the swarthy leader.

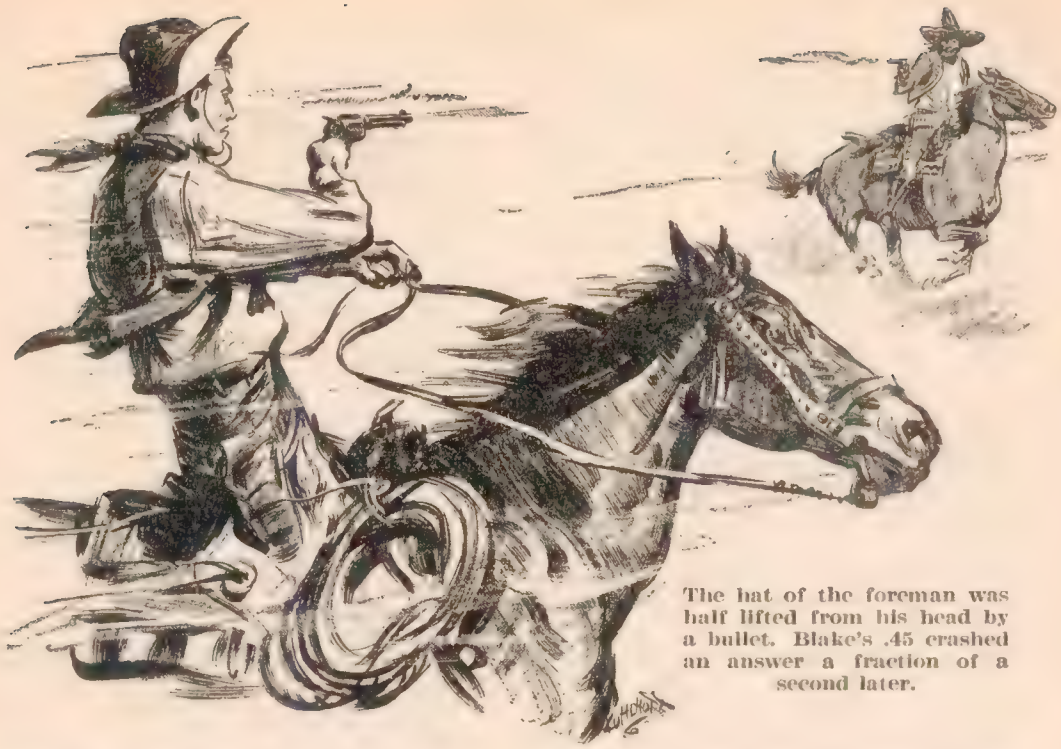
"Viva Cuero! Maten los gringos!"

Apparently the attack was to be made on foot. A number of men were assigned to hold the horses. The outlaw chief did not take the trouble to scatter his forces in order to give the defenders less chance of hitting the charging Mexicans. Evidently he expected to storm the house at the first rush.

"Don't get goosey, boys," warned Lake. "Be sure you get a bead on your man before you fire. They'll do a lot of wild shooting, but we can't afford to do any. . . . Here they come."

They raced across the open like ants, shouting and whooping as they came. Without waiting to aim, they fired as they ran. The answer from the blockhouse was withering. A bandit dropped —another—and another.

Most of the Mexicans faltered—and broke. A group of them reached the door and began hammering at it with the butts of their rifles. One of them doubled up and went down, shot through the head. The rest turned and scattered,



The hat of the foreman was half lifted from his head by a bullet. Blake's .45 crashed an answer a fraction of a second later.

flying back for cover. In the retreat a huge giant in a wide gold-trimmed sombrero flung up his hands and slid forward on his face.

The firing died down. Stone's gaze swept the room, to take in the casualties. All of the party were still on their feet, but Ray Terrell was looking down with a surprised expression at his bleeding forearm. A bullet had passed through the flesh halfway between the wrist and the elbow.

"Ten of 'em down," Buck Spelvin shouted jubilantly. "Leastways, four are down for keeps, and the rest are crawling or limping off." He let out the old rebel yell he had heard so often when he had been a seventeen-year-old youngster with Mosby. "And nary a one of us even touched."

The women were standing on the stairs, their eyes searching the room.

"You're hurt, Ray," his cousin called, and ran to his side.

"A slug hit me in the arm," he explained.

"We'd better get him downstairs and dress the wound," the Spur cowboy said.

THE Mexicans were busy holding an animated discussion. It broke up, to await the result of an offered flag of truce. A bowlegged vaquero approached the fort house cautiously, stopping several times to wave the white rag. When he was about fifty yards away he stopped and poured out a spate of Spanish. The purport of it was that General Cuero would let them go in peace if they would surrender and give up their arms.

"We'd be murdered like Crabbe's men were*," Spelvin cried bitterly. "Tell 'em to come and get us if they want us."

"Better play for time," Stone Heath suggested.

"That's right," assented Lake. "We'll ask for a quarter-hour to talk it over."

The bowlegged Mexican told them that Cuero would give them five minutes, no more. At the end of that time he would storm the house and wipe the defenders out, *muy pronto*.

During the armistice the defenders reloaded their weapons and discussed the outlook. They decided to offer a counter-proposition in order to gain a few minutes more. If Cuero would send all of his men away but half a dozen, to show good faith, they would accept the proposed terms.

To this the Mexican leader consented. Seven or eight of the bandits stayed with

*In April, 1857, Henry A. Crabbe of California led a troop of filibusters into Sonora, under a secret pact to assist Ignacio Pesqueira to become governor of that state. Prior to the arrival of Crabbe's forces, Pesqueira had defeated his enemies and achieved his ambition. To retain his popularity he repudiated the Americans and attacked them. After several skirmishes the filibusters were penned up in Cavorca. Crabbe's forces were besieged for a week. They ran out of food, water, and ammunition. Under promise of their lives they at last surrendered. Fifty-seven gaunt survivors were led out to the plaza, stood against a wall, and died by the fusillade.

him. The rest rode over the hill, taking their loot with them.

Lake said, grimly, "He'll have them back here in no time when he finds we're not coming out to be massacred."

The bandy-legged vaquero came forward again with his white flag to tell the besieged they might now come out safely.

CHAPTER XXII

WHILE he was still a long way from the ranch Blake heard the far faint popping of many guns. He gave his horse the spur and drew from underneath the belt of his leathers the .45 revolver he had borrowed from Mac. From the tracks on the dusty road he could tell that many riders had traveled it recently toward the ranch. Cuero usually rode with a large band. If Blake appeared on the scene alone they would probably rub him out instantly. The sensible course would be to wait for Buchanan and his own boys, but this was something he could not do. His wife and baby were at the focal point of that heavy firing he heard.

The gun explosions died down. Had the *bandidos* captured and exterminated the defenders, or had they been driven back? He was consumed with anxiety.

Blake dragged his mount to a halt and swung into the brush. For over the hilltop just this side of the ranch a disorderly mob of riders were appearing. From the loot they carried he could tell they had plundered the house and store. If they had captured the house—

He tore through the brush, keeping out of sight of the road. As he came out of the clearing he saw half a dozen Mexicans on horseback in a group. They were facing toward the old fort house, their eyes fixed on a vaquero with a white flag who was approaching it.

The heart of the foreman lifted with joy. The Americans had taken refuge in the old log ranch house and were still holding their own! That there had been a battle, was clear. Four dead bodies lay stretched in the open and several wounded men could be seen under the cottonwoods.

Swiftly Blake sized up the situation. Cuero had sent his men away temporarily to trap the defendants into surrender. If the gringoes gave up their arms, the bandit leader would call back his men and start the massacre. That was his plan.

Blake's eyes blazed. For once Cuero had lost the game. He had moved too slowly; inside of fifteen minutes Buchanan's cowboys and the riders from the cow hunt would be on the scene.

The Spur foreman rode into the open. He put his horse at a canter and let out the *"Hi-yippi-yi!"* of the Texas cowman, to warn those in the house that he was not an enemy. The marksmanship of the Mexicans did not worry him much. Everybody knew they could not hit a barn door.

The leader of the bandits turned and caught sight of Forrest. The heavy-set Mexican had a dark pockmarked face. He gave a shout and moved his horse in the direction of the Texan, at the same time snatching out a revolver.

The two men rode toward the apex of an acute angle formed by the directions they took. Cuero shouted a malediction and fired. The hat of the foreman was half lifted from his head by a bullet tearing through the crown. Blake's .45 crashed an answer a fraction of a second later. Cuero caught at his stomach. His face contorted with pain. The weapon dropped from his hand; he began to sag.

Leaning low in the saddle, Blake dashed across the open. He shouted his name aloud, over and over, since he did not want to stop lead sent by his friends. The vaquero with the white flag scuttled away for safety. As the foreman reached the house, he flung himself from the saddle. Two or three bullets tore into the log walls of the house as he shouted for admission.

AS the door opened, he ran inside, and Stone Heath with a whoop of joy slammed the door shut and bolted it.

"My wife?" asked Blake hoarsely.

"Fine as the wheat. The baby too. And Miss Decker. None of us hurt except Ray Terrell. He got a pill in his arm." Stone pointed down the ladder to the cellar. "Hot zicketty, I'm glad you got here, fellow."

A moment later Janet and the baby were in Blake's arms. He had to choke down the emotion that filled his throat.

"I—thought I'd never get here," he said huskily.

"It's been—terrible," Janet murmured, clinging to him. "But how did you get through those dreadful men?"

From the top of the ladder Stone called down. "Looks like they're fixing to go. They're carrying away the fellow you dropped. Must have been some one important."

"Cuero, I think," Blake told him. "He was all tricked up with fine clothes. Buchanan's men will be here soon, and there will be a bunch from our cow-camp dropping in. The *bandidos* are beginning to figure they have run into a hornet's nest, don't you reckon?"

FORREST joined the men upstairs. It was clear the raiders were wavering. The sound of the firing had brought them back over the hill and they were gathered in groups of excited gesticulating men. Several of the band had been killed and more wounded. Though Cuero was not yet dead, it was plain he had ridden on his last raid. They had come to the Spur to raid a defenseless ranch, not to fight a desperate battle with grim Texans who had their backs to the wall! Without a leader, the *bandidos* did not know whether to finish the job—or call it a day and ride for the river.

At this critical moment Buchanan's men appeared over the brow of the hill. The Mexicans had had enough. They fled, leaving their wounded behind them.

To the men who had saved his wife and child Blake made brief thanks. "Nothing I can say, boys, but thanks! Some of you counted me an enemy—but you acted like good Texans and rode hell-for-leather to save women and a baby, knowing you'd likely never come out alive."

Buck Spelvin growled an embarrassed and ungracious disclaimer: "Hell, I just came to get a crack at Cuero's raiders. I never did like greasers."

"Now you're here, Buck, you'd better stay," Forrest suggested. "There will always be a place at the Spur for you."

"No, I reckon I'll drift to Arizona with Lake and Terrell," he said. "This aint no healthy spot for us."

Forrest knew that Lake and Terrell would have to leave the State or be captured eventually.

"If you are heading for Arizona pick the best horses you can find on the Spur," he said. "In case you're ever up against it drop me a line. I'll never forget what you've done for me today."

"I reckon you would have done it for us," Ray Terrell said, flushing with confusion in which pleasure had a share.

He was a youth of inherently good instincts, but led astray by others gone bad. It had been a long time since he had felt satisfied with his conduct. He intended to take another name in a new country, send back the money he had taken as his share of the express robbery, and cut loose from lawlessness.

"I'd ask you and Lake to stay here but it wouldn't be safe," Forrest said. "Arizona is a good bet. It's coming on the map as a cattle country. You boys ought to do well out there."

Hard on the heels of Buchanan's men came the riders from the cow hunt. They reported a brush with the departing bandits.

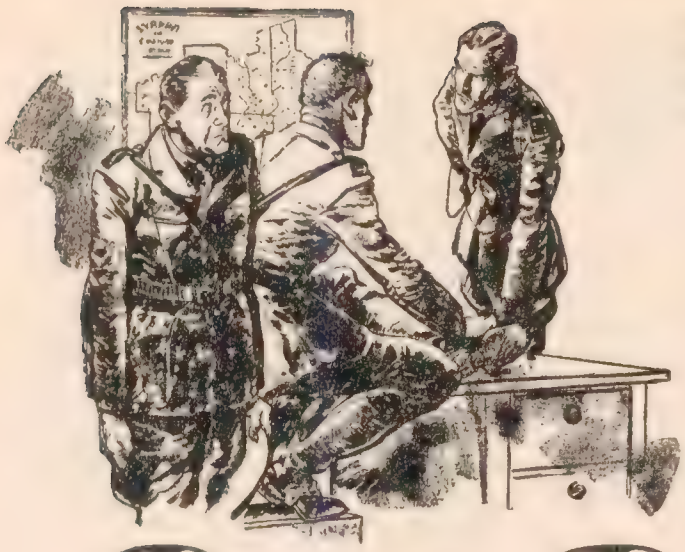
Before the defenders of the fort house had evacuated it Juan Cuero had died. The wounded outlaws begged for mercy without expecting to get it. They were surprised when Forrest treated them as prisoners of war until the rangers arrived to take charge of them.

THE raid of Cuero was the last invasion of Texas for a generation; in fact, until the rise of another notorious bandit named Pancho Villa. Law came to West Texas. The bad men gave up their evil ways or were wiped out.

Under new and better conditions the Spur ranch prospered. Within five years the Forrests were its owners. Stone Heath was the foreman. He had a share of the increase and was on his way to become a man of substance. He was a respectable married man and father, and his two children had red hair like their attractive mother. By this time Blake King Forrest had two small sisters. The youngsters played together as one family.

Sometimes Blake and Stone talked over the old wild days when they had walked so carelessly on the edge of lawlessness; but they agreed that these were better ones. They were doing their part to build up a Texas where women and children would be safe, and in this they were only carrying on the work started by Austin and Houston, the ideal for which Travis and Bowie and Crockett had died at the Alamo.

THE END



In the spring a trooper's fancy may lightly turn to thoughts of romance—until he has to handle a gang of hold-up men.

By
ROBERT R. MILL

"This better be good," he warned, "—and God knows I hate a liar."

Roving Patrol

SAP began to flow in the maple trees. The tops of snow fences became visible. Other signs appeared to give the lie to the disgruntled old woodsman who declared that the seasons in northern New York consisted of July, August and winter. Then, to clinch the fact that spring did visit the section, and that the glad season was at hand, Sergeant Henry Linton fell in love.

Now this, as the members of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police, well knew, was an annual occurrence, and one that shared importance with the disappearance of ice in the lakes.

Captain Charles Field, commanding officer, was the first to note the symptoms. Mr. Linton, accompanied by Trooper Harris, had returned from his station in Deerville for supplies. They tarried in the barracks long enough to consume a substantial supper. After the meal, when the troop had adjourned to the living-room, Captain Field made his announcement:

"Before many days, the snow detail will be cutting grass."

Rookies, glancing out the windows at white fields, wondered what prompted the prediction.

"Sergeant Linton," continued Captain Field, "is in love. I suspected it when he came in here looking blanker than ever. I was sure when he turned down the third pork-chop. Spring, and the silly season, have arrived. God give me strength! I'll need it."

There was a laugh, in which everybody but Mr. Linton joined.

"And speaking of the silly season," continued Captain Field, "take a look at this." As an exhibit, he offered the front page of a newspaper.

Lieutenant Edward David shifted the huge mass of bone and muscle that caused him to be called Tiny, enough to view the exhibit. The main headline was devoted to the plight of two downstate policemen, who had been kidnaped by fleeing gangsters, and who had escaped from their captors. A three-column cut showed the policemen being congratulated upon their escape by the mayor, who had an arm over the shoulders of each man.

Mr. David's voice and face were free from guile as he drawled:

"Right nice of them to welcome the boys home. I see by the paper they gave them a dinner."

Captain Field snorted his contempt.

"If that ever happens to one of you birds, don't come back. You'll get no dinner. There will be no posing for pictures. I may put my hands on you, but not on your shoulders. Is that plain?"

Apparently it was—to everybody but Mr. David.

"I think the boys were right lucky."

Captain Field prepared a verbal blast, but before he could deliver it, Mr. David slouched out of the room in search of Trooper Harris, who was servicing the troop car for the return voyage to Deerville.

"Who is she this year?" asked Mr. David.

"Teacher at the rural school south of the village," said Mr. Harris.

"What does she look like?"

Mr. Harris assumed a rapt expression.

"Well, she has swell eyes, and awful nice hair. Her mouth—"

"Does she have ears?" demanded Mr. David.

"Sure. Say—"

"And is she a white girl?"

"Sure. What's the big—"

"That's all," said Mr. David. "Now I'll have no trouble identifying her."

Mr. David quit the garage, and assumed a post near the rear door of the barracks. Soon his wait was rewarded by the appearance of Mr. Linton, who paused on the steps to note with approval the moon that was visible in the evening sky. Then, as he made his way toward the garage, Mr. Linton broke forth in song:

You can't stop me from lovin' you;
You can't stop me—

"From playing the fool," was the contribution from Mr. David, delivered in a deep bass.

Mr. Linton halted, and being a resourceful gentleman, he hastened to beat his friend to the draw.

"I know, Tiny. I sure did get in a swell mess last spring. But this is different. This—"

"This can't be the one and only," interrupted Mr. David, "because that was what you called the one last spring."

"That," declared Mr. Linton, "seems years ago."

"Maybe," Mr. David admitted; "but your mental age hasn't kept up with the years."

Mr. Linton waxed indignant.

"Say, what's wrong with a guy falling in love with a nice girl, marrying her and settling down? Why shouldn't a guy have a home of his own, with a nice garden, and maybe a youngster or two playing in the yard? You guys give me a pain. You act as if it was something unnatural, like wanting to do extra duty."

"It's a swell picture," Tiny David admitted. "But—"

"Well?" Mr. Linton challenged.

"Did you ever stop to think that nice girls wear clothes? Clothes cost money. So do houses, and gardens, and youngsters and yards. In a month or two, when you have that thought out, estimate what they would cost each month. Then rest, because you don't want to overtax yourself. When you have recovered your strength, put down a sergeant's salary, and try to subtract the other total from it. It's a good trick, if you can do it, but better men than you have failed."

"Bessie," declared Mr. Linton, with an air of triumph, "wants to keep on teaching after we are married. Only for a year or two," he hastened to add. "By that time I will be on a pay-roll that is paid off with real money."

"My error," conceded Tiny David. "You and Bessie seem to have thought of everything. But let me intrude with one vulgar thought: The Skipper doesn't go in for romance. He's funny that way, but he believes a trooper should put in his time out on the road and at the sub-station, and not in the parlor or on the front porch with Bessie. Keep that in mind, Linny. That is, unless you two have it doped out that you can live on Bessie's salary."

"I never let the outfit down," protested Mr. Linton.

"Not much," Tiny David admitted. "But when last spring's attack was at its peak—"

"Last spring," Mr. Linton hastened to interpose, "is ancient history."

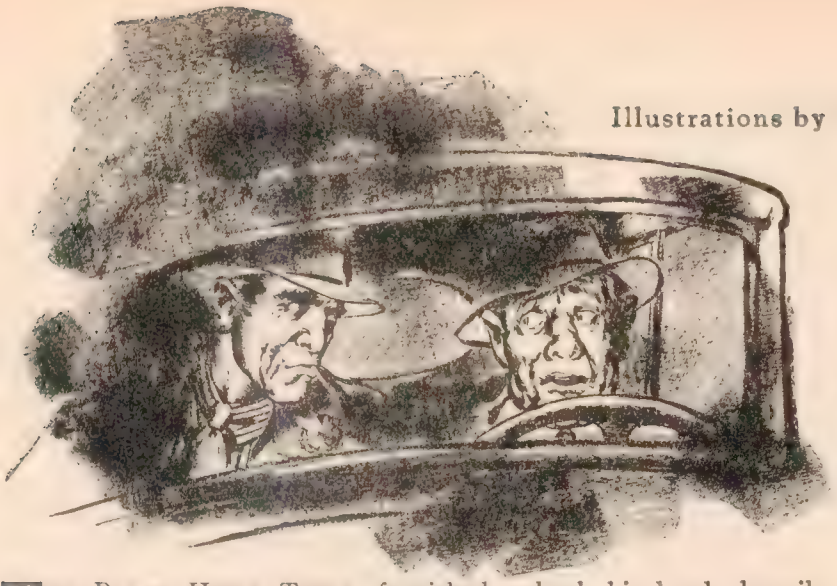
"I hope so," said Mr. David.

LATER, the night man in the garage reported that Mr. Linton had been singing when he pulled out for Deerville.

"At least I think that is what you would call it," he insisted, when pressed for details. "As near as I could make out, the tune was 'Harbor Lights,' and he was using the words from 'Nesting Time in Flatbush.' Not bad, considering what he can do when he really sings!"

And that night Captain Field made a note on his pad. For the next month or so, until the attack had reached its peak and subsided, the Deerville sub-station would be the weak link in the troop's defenses. That weak link would receive attention, in the form of visits of inspection at informal hours. Some of those visits of inspection, perhaps those at the most informal hours, would be made by Captain Field in person.

Illustrations by Earl Blossom



"With Joe out there's one less in the split—and we didn't need him no more!"

The Black Horse Troop, furnished with frequent bulletins by Trooper Harris, was able to keep fairly close check on the progress made by Mr. Linton in his suit.

"Three in the race at the start," Mr. Harris confided, on one of his visits to the barracks. "Linny, the guy who works in the bank, and the guy who runs the weekly paper. Then Linny and the newspaper guy sort of ganged up on the banker guy, and he is out."

The start of the trout season found the newspaper man eliminated.

"He drinks," Mr. Harris explained. "Bessie found out about it. I won't say she went so far as to pull that line about 'lips that touch liquor,' but that was the general idea, and the newspaper guy is among the also-rans. That gives Linny a clear track as he goes into the stretch."

"Think he will make it?" asked an interested bystander.

Mr. Harris appeared to ponder deeply.

"Maybe. But there are complications."

"Such as?" prompted his questioner.

"To begin with, Bessie is ambitious. Don't get the idea she is a gold-digger, but she is practical. Being a school-teacher, she knows how to add and subtract. When she looks at the answers, she reminds Linny that there are jobs where they pay off every week, and that when the necessaries have been subtracted from that pay, there still is something over for tea, cakes and other wild luxuries."

Mr. Harris paused to light a cigarette.

"That puts Linny on the spot. He likes the outfit, and he likes the life. He feels no wild yearning to connect himself with a job that means populating an office. So he stalls." Mr. Harris shook his head gloomily. "Bessie is a bad gal to stall."

"How are you betting?" came the question from the audience.

"Me? I am betting on a showdown—and soon."

This prediction was made early in June, and before the middle of the same month Mr. Harris was established as a true prophet.

It was at this season that teachers' contracts for the coming year became a matter of vital interest. The Deerville School Board was more than satisfied with the lady of Mr. Linton's choice, and was entirely willing to retain her. The lady, however, requested time to consider before signing the contract.

The delay was prompted by the fact that she had a better offer from a down-state city, where opportunities for advancement were greater. Only one thing caused her to hesitate: She knew that if she accepted the city position, it meant that one Henry Linton gradually would fade from her life.

Bessie and Linton talked it over.

"Do you want to go?" Linton asked.

"No," she admitted.

"Then why are you going?"

She hesitated. "Because—because I can't see a future for—for us here. You will be in the Troop. I am willing to keep on working, but I'll be a country school-teacher. We will be getting older all the time. It just won't work out."

Mr. Linton swallowed hastily. "But I've told you I'm willing to quit the outfit. I've told you I'll get a job that pays more, and leads somewhere. I've told you that—"

"Yes," she said, "you have told me all that. But have you done a single thing to bring it about?"

Mr. Linton swallowed twice. "Jobs are hard to find right now. No use cutting loose from the outfit until I have something lined up."

She was kind, but firm. "That's true. But have you made any effort to find something else to do?"

Linton made a movement toward her.

"No!" She checked him. "Not tonight—not when I am with you. I want you to think it over when you are alone. It will mean giving up a lot. I want you to decide whether you want to do that, and whether you will be happy if you do. I want you to be very sure."

She stood up. "I won't decide about the school tonight. Tomorrow is Saturday. Stop by after lunch, and tell me what you want me to do."

TROOPER HARRIS was the authority for the statement that Saturday morning found Mr. Linton moody and preoccupied. The two men ate their breakfast in silence, and then entered the office of the sub-station to group about the teletype and see what the day had to offer.

Two minor complaints had been investigated, and the two men were back at the sub-station when the bell on the teletype machine went into violent action. They leaped to their feet and bent over the paper as the keys clicked out:

SYRPORT POLICE REPORT THAT THREE ARMED BANDITS FORCED TWO MESSENGERS OF MESHEASY GEAR COMPANY CARRYING PAY-ROLL OF $18,000 INTO CAR AND ESCAPED. BELIEVED TO BE HEADING NORTH TO CANADIAN BORDER. CAR IS BLACK SEDAN. MONEY CARRIED IN BAG CHAINED TO WRISTS OF MESSENGERS. ALL PATROLS TAKE STATIONS AT ONCE AND REMAIN UNTIL RELIEVED. USE EXTREME CARE IN APPREHENDING THESE MEN AS THEY ARE DESPERATE. REPEAT.

Linton and Harris were in their troop car, ready to depart to their station, when the bell summoned them again:

BODY OF TWO MESSENGERS IN SYRPORT PAY-ROLL ROBBERY AND BODY OF THIRD MAN BELIEVED TO BE MEMBER OF BANDIT BAND FOUND ALONG ROAD NEAR HOBART TOWERS. BANDIT BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED BY HIS CONFEDERATES BECAUSE HE OBJECTED TO MURDER OF MESSENGERS. FINDING OF BODIES STRENGTHENS BELIEF BANDITS ARE HEADING FOR CANADIAN BORDER. ALL PATROLS STAND BY. ROVING PATROLS FROM BARRACKS WILL OPERATE IN VICINITY OF CANARAS LAKE, LAKE TRANQUIL AND DEERVILLE.

Sergeant Linton and Trooper Harris took their stations on the southern outskirts of the village. Northbound traffic was light, and easily checked.

Shortly before noon, they were visited by the first roving patrol, which was commanded by Lieutenant James Crosby.

"Any luck?" asked Mr. Linton.

"Roads as empty as your head," declared Mr. Crosby. "We are cutting over toward Tranquil Lake. They are more likely to come up on that road, and there is nothing to stop them until Tranquil Lake. Don't get hurt."

Mr. Linton viewed with relief the departure of the patrol. His glance rested upon a house near by, from which wires extended to a pole carrying telephone trunk lines.

"I'll be back in a minute," he told Mr. Harris.

"I would make it even less than that," Mr. Harris advised. "We are due for company, official and otherwise. This is a bad day to be caught hanging on a telephone, chatting of this and that."

It didn't take long.

"Bessie?" said Sergeant Linton.

"Yes, Henry." This call meant only one thing: he had made his decision. Happiness was evident in her voice.

"Bessie—" Mr. Linton was not at his best. "I won't be able to come over this afternoon. You see—"

"I see," she interrupted. Her voice was icy. "It is just as well. I will be busy. Busy packing." Her words came in a torrent. "The job you were going to give up comes first. Don't bother to try to see me this evening when you can spare time for it. I'll be at the school, getting my things there."

"But Bessie—" protested Linton.

There was a click as the connection was broken. Mr. Linton attracted the attention of the operator, and gave the number. He waited.

"Ringing 'em," said the operator.

Another wait.

"They don't answer."

Somewhat in a daze, Mr. Linton returned to his post. He and Mr. Harris lunched on sandwiches, brought by a passing small boy, who had been pressed into service by Harris.

The afternoon wore on, and Mr. Linton continued his work mechanically, but his heart was not in it. Public Enemies from One to Fourteen could have happened along that road without arousing even passing interest on the part of Mr. Linton.

Five o'clock saw the return of the roving patrol headed by Mr. Crosby, who took one look at Mr. Linton and demanded:

"What's the matter with him? Is it catching?"

Mr. Harris, who had suffered for weeks, and who was nearing the end of endurance, declared:

"Must have been a death in his family. Nothing else could make a pan that mournful."

Instantly, Mr. Crosby was all sympathy.

"No! Don't tell me it was his Aunt Hester? Not the one who could read and write? Ah, well, as Cæsar said, 'Time heals all things.'" He appealed to his audience. "Or was it Cæsar?"

Mr. Linton saw an opening.

"It wasn't Cæsar," he declared. "It was the judge who sent your Uncle Oscar away for life. Furthermore, why should my Aunt Hester be taken when there are so many lieutenants?"

Mr. Crosby, seeing that the tide had turned, sought refuge in official dignity.

"Well, don't let it get you down. We must be moving along. Glad to find you boys on the job."

ABOUT this time, a black sedan was moving north on the road leading to Deerville. The car had two occupants. Behind the wheel was a large, awkward man, whose eyes indicated fear. Beside him sat a small, dapper and oily-looking man, whose dark eyes flashed with evil menace.

"You shouldn't have ought to have bumped off Joe," said the man behind the wheel. "He didn't do nothing."

His companion laughed. "Why not?" he demanded. "With Joe out, there is one less in on the split. And we didn't need him no more."

The hands on the wheel trembled slightly.

"No," the driver admitted, "we didn't need Joe no more. But you need me." His voice throbbed with intensity. "I know all the roads in this neck of the woods. I know where them cowboy cops hangs out, and how to get around 'em. You'd never make it without me, Moe."

His companion grunted.

"Like this hide-out I has cased for tonight," the driver continued. "We turn off the main road before we hit the cops at Deerville. Half a mile down a dirt road, and there we are."

He stole a glance at his companion, to see if this was registering.

"Nice little schoolhouse, where we can hole up tonight and tomorrow. Stand of pine trees where we can get this bus out of sight. Tomorrow night, when them cowboys is tired of blockin' roads that aint getting them nothing, we pull out and head for the border. Me, I know a nice dirt road that aint cluttered up with customhouses."

The man called Moe nodded shortly.

"That's right, Hank," he admitted. "You're useful—sort of."

LIEUTENANT DAVID, in charge of a roving patrol, halted his car, beside the Bordertown set patrol, which was headed by Lieutenant Charles McMann.

"What do you know?" asked Mr. David.

"Less than that," said Mr. McMann.

"In that case," declared Mr. David, "we will move along. Thought we would cruise through Canaras Lake, Lake Tranquil, and wind up at Deerville," He lowered his voice. "Might do no harm to check up on Linny, and see that he is patrolling—not girling."

"Greater minds than yours are acting on the same idea," said Mr. McMann. "We cleared the Skipper less than ten minutes ago. He was bound over the same route, and with the same thought in mind."

Tiny David gave a low whistle. "In that case, it might be a good idea to skip Canaras Lake and Lake Tranquil, and take the cutoff to Deerville."

"That," Mr. McMann admitted, "is a thought. And while your mind is working, will you concentrate on how we are going to get something to eat?"

Tiny David turned to his companions.

"You birds pile out and hold down this post while Lieutenant McMann and his men tie on the feedbag. I'll pick you up on my way back."

"That," said Mr. McMann, "qualifies you as one of the outstanding personalities of 1938." . . . .

The approach of darkness served only to increase Mr. Linton's despair. Traffic was light. He had plenty of time for his thoughts, and they were not pleasant.

By this time, Bessie's packing would be completed. She would be starting for the school, intending to gather her belongings there, a task that would not require much time. The southbound night train left Deerville at nine-twenty-five. Perhaps she would be on it.

"Stick 'em up, you so-and-so!" roared a harsh voice.

That thought struck Mr. Linton like a blow over the heart. That mustn't be. It couldn't be. Anything was better than that. He made a quick decision, and turned to Trooper Harris.

"Bill," he spoke in an offhand manner, "I am going down the road a piece. Be back in about half an hour. Hold down the fort, will you?"

"Sure," said Mr. Harris. "But in case Washington calls, and wants your advice on the Far East situation, what shall I tell them?"

Conscience caused Mr. Linton to twist before the sarcasm, but a great fear drove him on.

"I am not trying to put over anything on you, Bill. I'll be down at the school. I'll cut it short, but I have to go."

"Everything will be all right," Mr. Harris assured him. "In case the Skipper drops by, I'll tell him where he can find you. I'll even have him sing one verse of, 'I Am a Little Prairie Flower,' so you'll know who it is."

Mr. Linton hurried away with a purposeful stride, but with a heavy heart.

BESSIE HOBBS was far from happy. She knew she had been unreasonable. She was a forthright young woman, and prepared to go the whole way in atoning for her mistake. But three telephone-calls to the sub-station had brought forth the same information: Mr. Linton was out on the road. They didn't know when he would be back—probably not before morning.

News of the Syrport robbery had reached Deerville. To the already sufficiently gloomy facts, the rumor committee had added vague details of an encounter along the road in which a trooper had been wounded. The sub-station had denied the report, but the denial had added little to Miss Hobbs' peace of mind. Henry, her Henry, was out on the road, doing his duty, and probably facing death. Because she had refused to listen to his explanations, he would be bitter and even more reckless than usual. She would be directly responsible if anything happened to him.

Miss Hobbs ceased pacing the front porch, and looked out into the gathering dusk. She must do something about this!

She thought of the telephone conversation, the words that she would give so much to have left unspoken. She had told Henry that she would be at the school after supper. There was just a chance that he might stop there as he passed on patrol. That chance was worth a two-mile walk. Even if he didn't have an opportunity to stop, anything was better than this waiting.

Bessie Hobbs headed for the school.

Tiny David halted his car beside Trooper Harris, who saluted smartly.

"Evening, sir. Sergeant Linton will be back in a minute. He—he just stepped over to telephone the sub-station."

"Save that hokum for the Skipper," retorted Tiny David.

Mr. Harris sought refuge in injured innocence.

"If it please the Lieutenant—"

"It doesn't please me," snapped Tiny David. "The Skipper is on his way here. Where is Linny?" His big hand sought Harris' collar. "Come clean, trooper!"

"Down at the school," said Harris.

He jumped back to escape the dirt thrown by the rear wheels of Tiny David's automobile. . . .

The school was in darkness as Linton approached, but the wooden bar had been removed from across the outside of the door, which indicated that the building was occupied. Linton's heart skipped a beat at the thought that perhaps the girl, unhappy as he was, was sitting in the darkness and regretting what had happened.

He left the walk, and stepped on the grass as he approached the door, intending to surprise her. He gained the porch, and gave the door a gentle push. It swung inward.

"Bessie!" he called.

There was no answer, but he heard a sound inside the darkened building. He pushed the door fully open, and entered.

The barrel of a pistol was thrust into his stomach, causing him to gasp in surprise and pain.

"Stick 'em up, you so-and-so!" roared a harsh voice.

The barrel of a second gun found a resting-place in his side.

A second and less resolute voice cried: "Stick 'em up, you!"

Sergeant Linton raised his hands. His gun was removed from the holster, and detached from the lanyard. Exploring fingers entered his hip pocket, and removed the blackjack. The rays of a flashlight illuminated the scene.

"Jeepers!" cried an oily-looking man. "A cowboy cop!"

The voice of his companion, shrill with fright, sounded the warning:

"Them birds travels in pairs. We got to get out of here."

The voice of the other man was steady and sinister.

"Don't jump out of your panties. We'll lam out of here in good time, and we'll take this clown with us."

LINTON, regaining a bit of his composure, calculated the odds against him. The gun was being held just out of his reach.

"This baby," continued his captor, "will make a swell shield. His pals aint going to risk bumping him off. And he knows where his pals is hanging out. He will steer us around them. If he don't, it will be just too bad."

Thoughts clicked in Linton's brain:

Absent from post. Kidnaped by gangsters. He remembered Captain Field's views on that subject.

"I'll see you in hell first!" he told them.

The smaller man moved forward.

"You're right on the place," he growled, "but you'll be alone."

Another thought came to Linton: Bessie was due any minute. She must be kept clear of this. He must get them away. What would happen afterward—

He shrugged. "You win," he said.

The oily-looking man smiled his approval. They left the building. Linton went first, with his hands held over his head. The oily-looking man walked behind him, with a gun trained at his back; the second man walked at his side. . . .

Bessie Hobbs approached the school, taking a shortcut through the woods. She had walked fast, and she was out of breath, so she halted at the fringe of the woods.

The door of the school opened. Linton came out, with his hands raised. She started to call to him, but checked the cry as two other men, with guns, appeared. She drew back into the shadows.

Then, with terror clutching at her heart, she raced through the woods, bound for the village.

TINY DAVID halted his car some distance from the school, and approached the building warily. He was angry at Linton. Do no harm to give the fellow a good scare! He left the main road, and approached the building from the rear. There was a truck trail through a clump of trees. Tiny David followed it. Soon he came to a halt before a black sedan.

The trooper whistled quietly. He dropped to his knees, used the skirts of his coat as a shield, and threw the rays of his flashlight on a license-plate. A downstate number! He threw open a door, and examined the interior of the car, again shielding the light with his coat. There were dark stains on the upholstery.

His heart was hammering, and he had a premonition of disaster as he crept forward toward the school. He reached the edge of the woods. It was quite dark, but the light of the moon illuminated the clearing before the building.

A girl in a white dress appeared on the opposite side of that clearing, standing in the shadow of the trees. Tiny David held his breath.

Then his attention was distracted as the door of the school opened. Linton appeared. The two men followed. The girl had vanished. Prodded by the two men, Linton headed for the truck trail.

Tiny David slipped back into the woods. Moving with a speed and quietness that belied his usual appearance of clumsiness, he made his way to the black sedan, and hid himself in the foliage.

The three men appeared. There was a moment of confusion as they ordered Linton to the front seat. Tiny David leaped forward. The butt of his revolver descended on the head of the oily-looking man, who went down without a sound. The other gangster hesitated just a moment. That was enough. Linton threw himself upon him. All Linton's anger and shame found an outlet in that fight. It didn't last long. . . .

The two troopers stood gazing at each other.

"Tiny," Linton began, "I know I have been—"

"Skip it," ordered Tiny David. "The Old Man is cruising the neighborhood. Let's get organized."

BESSIE HOBBS' dress was torn. Her stockings were cut to ribbons. Her legs and arms were bleeding from cuts inflicted by underbrush. She was gasping for breath as she staggered on toward the State Police sub-station.

Captain Field, who had entered the building to make some pertinent inquiries, and who was prepared to resume his search for one Henry Linton, was sitting in his car as she approached. Unable to speak, she raised her arms toward him in mute appeal.

Captain Field leaped from the car. His arms supported her.

"What is the trouble?" he demanded.

"Henry Linton. . . . They have him. . . . We had a date at the school, and they must have been hiding there. . . . Oh, God, it's all my fault!"

A hoarse growl came from the throat of Captain Field But before he could move, a clerk appeared on the porch of the sub-station.

"They got 'em, Captain! Lieutenant David called from the lock-up. They are down there now." . . . .

Numerous excited citizens had been pushed from the room, and Captain Field, Tiny David and Henry Linton were alone in the little office that was used by the local constable. Captain Field stood with a thumb hooked in his gun-belt, an ominous frown upon his face.

"This better be good," he warned. "And God knows I hate a liar."

Tiny David, sprawled on a flat-top desk, sighed with resignation.

"Yes sir. There's not much to tell. I got a tip something unusual was going on over at the school." (That was true. No need to explain what that something was, and that the tip came from Trooper Harris.) "We went over there, and found the get-away car hidden in the woods. The bandits were in the school. Tough job to get them out."

Tiny David paused to allow that fact to sink in.

"But Linny did the trick. He marched in big as life, singing out some dame's name, and pretending he had a date with her there. Naturally, they put their guns on him. Then they got the bright idea they would take Linny along as a hostage." Tiny David shook his head gravely. "Can't say I would have cared to have been in Linny's shoes just then.

"When they marched Linny out of the building, I was waiting by their car. We ganged up on them there." Mr. David yawned. One foot slipped from the desk; it required some effort to return the limb to a place where his spur helped to hold it in position. "That's about all there is to it, sir."

Captain Field stood glaring at them. Mr. Linton, obviously, was ill at ease. Mr. David, however, stifled a yawn.

"It is a good story," Captain Field admitted. "I can't say you were overly respectful to Truth, but you didn't actually flout her. But I'll let that ride."

He turned his attention to Mr. Linton:

"Tiny said he wouldn't have wanted to have been in your shoes. I don't think you relished it. I am letting it ride because I am banking on your having enough sense not to bring about a spot like that again."

"Yes sir," said Mr. Linton. "Thank you, Captain."

CAPTAIN FIELD brushed that aside as he turned to Tiny David.

"Best way to cure a sergeant from leaving his post to keep dates is to get him married, give him leave of absence for the first month or so—and after that he will be glad to hang around a sub-station, where he can call his soul his own."

"That," Tiny admitted, "is a thought."

"On my way over here," continued Captain Field, "I happened to run across the dame Linny pretended he had a date with. She was all cut up. Said it was all her fault. Said she didn't mean it. Said Linny can stay in the outfit. Said a lot of things that didn't make sense, because Linny didn't have any date, and all he was doing was fooling those two muggs. But Linny better take a run over there and straighten her out."

Mr. Linton stood looking from one man to the other. There was affection in that glance, gratitude, and an unspoken promise for the future.

"And wipe that dying-calf look off your pan," continued Captain Field. "You may thank us now, but in six months you'll be cursing us." He cleared his throat. "Take it out on him." He jerked a thumb at Tiny David. "He's the guy who played Cupid."

REAL EXPERIENCES

Adrift on the Whelping Ice

Each month we complete the magazine with a group of true adventure stories contributed by our readers. (For details of our Real Experience contest, see page 3.) First we give you a story of desperate hazard which comes to us from Newfoundland.

By R. P. McRICE

MY partner Job Kemp and I were on whelping ice, six miles off the shore. The lighthouse on Long Point looked no bigger than a toy ark, perched on the top of the mountainous height where it stands guard over the broad outer reaches of Notre Dame Bay, Beneath it the perpendicular flint walls of the ice-capped cliffs that marked the shoreline were scarcely visible in the frost-charged air.

Beyond us, as far as the eye could penetrate the grayish haze hovering over the floe, thousands of seals dotted the ice. The cry of whitecoats rose on every hand. Job raised his gaff to strike one.

"We'll take two each," he paused to say. "I'll pelt this one. You try your skill with another, so you'll know how to do it, next time we come out."

"Two each?" I asked. "That all we're going to take, after coming so far?"

"They're a month old, or thereabout —just in their prime. Most of the pelts will go sixty pounds or more," Job said.

Before I had time to say a word, the ice commenced to crack all around us. A few yards off, a yawning fissure formed, dividing the floe in a wavering line.

The upraised gaff fell back on Job's shoulder. He raised his head, sniffing the air. "The wind is gone western, shifted all of a sudden, and a heavy sea is heavin' in. Ice is breaking up already," he said.

A blast of wind smote us with sudden force. Outward from the bight, in an impenetrable cloud that blotted out everything behind it, a storm was advancing. We had gone less than fifty paces shoreward when it swept down upon us. Lateral sheets of fine hail stung our faces.

"Don't be in a rush," Job warned, when I started to forge ahead.

His face was crimson; icicles had formed on his bushy mustache, and frost from his breath was on the palm of the swan-skin mitten on the hand shielding his eyes to protect his sight. He turned, back to the wind, pulled off a mitten and rubbed his face with a bare hand.

"We'll be missed by now," he went on. "Best thing is to take it sort of easy, steer a course by the wind as straight as we can, and try to get near the inner edge of the ice so they'll have a chance to see us from the shore if the weather clears soon enough."

"Sure thing," I agreed.

Our progress was slow. "Slob" had formed in the rents and the blow-holes

of seals; and concealed by a layer of crusted snow, it looked like solid ice. We had to test each step we made with our gaffs.

We had been traveling an hour or more when we came to a widening wind-whipped lake that barred our way. Beneath us the ice rose and fell on a swelling sea, breaking into sheets at the water's edge. I crossed first, sinking halfway to the tops of my long Labrador moccasins as I leaped from pan to pan. Just as I reached the farther side, Job shouted a warning.

I shot a glance behind me. From around a pinnacled ice-mound, a seal of immense girth and as long as a rowboat was scuttling toward me high on his flippers. His hood was blown up as big and as tight as a football on top of his head; and from his snout protruded a ball of cartilage like a bubble of blood.

I sprang to my feet and started to run. The second step I took, I stumbled over a whitecoat near the edge of the lake and fell sprawling on hands and knees.

Before I had a chance to spring to my feet, the old dog hood took a grip on the slack of my horsehide mackinaw and flung me high over his head, tearing a fold of the leather, where he had it between his jaws, clean out of the back of my coat. I landed on top of the big riftered mound and coasted on my back down its glassy height. My head and shoulders splashed through freezing slob. I gulped down a mouthful of brine.

THE icy sea galvanized my numbed brain into activity. I felt myself sinking and struck out. A few desperate strokes, and my head came in contact with a solid obstruction. Tide lifted my legs. I was afloat under the ice!

I rolled on my back in the trough of a sea and, strange though it seems, got a breath of air, and was about to dive when something shot past me like a torpedo. I was conscious for a moment of being drawn after it, as though I were drifting on a rushing tide. My head and shoulders shot up through a vortex of whirling slob close behind a female hood that leaped out on the ice in a rush to suckle her whimpering pup.

I tried to crawl up on the ice, but slipped back again, too weak to make it. My jaws were stiff. Job caught sight of me before I could open my mouth wide enough to shout. Just as he pulled me out, the big dog hood, released from his paternal vigil, started toward the blowhole. We got to leeward of the vicious monster as fast as we could, and he swaggered past us. Pausing on the brink, he raised his head high and sniffed the air, then slipped into the sea, his barrel-like body filling the hole as he plunged through.

We looked at each other, grinning. Then I noticed that Job's clothes were covered with wet snow, and water was trickling down the legs of his sealskin moccasins.

"You're streaming wet as well as I," I said in surprise.

He nodded. "I fell in, crossing that lake. Got excited, I s'pose. . . . Looked like that old hood was going to tear you to pieces. We got to wring out our clothes before they freeze."

STRIP off our clothes on drifting Arctic ice, in a raging storm, with the glass around zero! My teeth clattered like castanets at the very thought, though I knew we would have to do just that, or perish. I managed to say:

"Your clothes are getting stiff already."

"On the outside," he replied. "I'm going to take them off right now, before they freeze."

We sat on our mackinaws in the lee of a riftered ice-hill, stripped and wrung out each garment as dry as we could. Fine snow gathered on our quivering skin. We rubbed each other down with our flannel shirts before dragging on our clothes. The dampness served to hold the heat our bodies generated, and we were soon warm.

Snow no longer was falling, and the wind had somewhat abated when we were fully dressed. We found ourselves on the edge of the ice-field, but the foam-covered sea stretched to the line of our limited horizon, and night was closing in.

A lone whitecoat raised its infant-like cry. Job rapped it on the head with his gaff, drew the knife from its sheath attached to his belt, and pelted the young seal with a few deft strokes.

With splinters whittled from the gaff handles, we started a fire in the midst of a mound of warm oily fat. Job fed the flames from a pile of pelts near by while I cooked the whitecoat's heart, holding it on the spike of my gaff. We ate it with a relish and were roasting two grease-dripping flippers over the raging fire when we heard the *chug-tut* of an approaching motorboat, and soon came the loud shouts of our eager rescuers as the keel of the boat ground against the ice.

Ants and Alligators

A noted soldier of fortune finds insects and reptiles dangerous foemen.

By TRACY RICHARDSON

ANTS! Millions of ants! For a minute I lay there too benumbed with fatigue fully to realize the nature of my torment; then with a shout I rolled out of my blanket and began slapping at the pests.

I could hear the slithering, rustling sound as they advanced to the attack. I could feel the biting sting of the advance guard. It was as if small pieces of flesh were being removed with red-hot pincers.

The rest of the camp were aroused and doing a good imitation of a Spanish fandango. The Indians were chattering in fear, but my German guide and companion viewed the situation with despair.

"It's the end!" he declared. "We'll be fortunate if we escape with our lives, and there's not a chance to save our supplies."

"You're crazy," I told him shortly. "I've not come this far to let such a little thing as ants stop me. Come on, let's get busy."

"You don't know ants," was his reply.

I was packing in through the bush of southern Chiapas, Mexico. I had heard of a great ruined city of the Mayas up on the Guyacan River, in a small valley near its head. So far as I could learn, no white man had ever been in this valley.

My party consisted of myself, just finishing up a timber cruise, checking the mahogany of the district; Fritz, a German gone native, and six Indian packers. The Indians spoke very little Spanish and Fritz had to act as my interpreter. For six days we had been slashing our way through the virgin jungle, following as close as possible the course of the river.

While Fritz and I were talking, the Indians were beating the ground and digging ditches with their machetes, trying to stem the invading horde—working with one hand and slapping ants with the other.

A squealing *Tyra* dashed blindly into camp, and for a minute the natives forgot the ants while they tried to kill the weasel-like animal, for I was paying a bounty for *Tyra* skins. It won through their flailing machetes and climbed onto a limb that hung out over the water.

"We'd better take to the water until the ants leave," I advised Fritz. He passed this thought along to the Indians, but at once they set up a wild chatter.

"They don't like the idea," said Fritz. "They say the alligators here are more dangerous than the ants. Remember the big fellow you shot just after we arrived here?"

Shortly after we had pitched camp, I had shot a giant saurian and Fritz and I had dragged the carcass ashore—the most gigantic animal of its kind I had ever seen. Not so long as some, not more than fifteen feet, while I had seen some more than twenty; but wide and thick. It was a good twelve inches between the eyes, and the body was every bit of three feet wide. Its hide was a dull yellow, denoting great age. There was actually moss growing on its back; and under its legs were dozens of huge leeches.

Now I threw the rays of my electric headlight out over the river, and it reflected the ruby-red light from a score or more alligator eyes. But I'd seen thousands of saurians in these rivers, and knew of but one authentic case where a man had been attacked. So I said to Fritz: "Do what you want to, but I'm going out on that little gravel spit and wait till the

ants finish up and go away." The gravel bar I referred to was about twenty feet from shore, and about a foot above the water-level.

I gathered my ruck-bag, which held my ammunition and small personal things, took my rifle and flashlight, and waded off to the island. As I walked ashore, I heard a slithering, scratching sound on the opposite side, and in the rays of my light I saw a scaly body sliding down into the water.

For a while Fritz and the Indians continued to fight the ants; then they gave up in despair against the overwhelming odds, and rushed into the water and onto the island.

FOR an hour we squatted there with no signs of life save an occasional squeal and thud that told of some animal overtaken by the ants in the tree-tops and brought to earth. I waded close to the shore with my flashlight to see what the ants were doing. This was the first time I had ever come into close contact with them, though I had heard stories enough; and once in Nicaragua had found a man's skeleton in a hammock, where he had been caught helpless with a broken leg and had been devoured by ants.

Right down to the water's edge the ants were working. Not five feet back was a large snake, or what looked like the form of a snake, for all I could see was ants. It was twelve feet long, and must have been as thick through as my thigh. It was writhing and threshing against hopeless odds, and it was only a question of minutes. Small balls of ants told where they had smaller animals covered, stripping the meat from their bones. I heard a crashing and growling in the tree-tops, and in the light of my flash I made out the form of a jaguar crawling out to the extreme end of a limb, snapping and snarling at the ants covering it. I called to Fritz, and while I held the light over his head so as to outline the sights on the target, he sent a bullet through the *tigre*, saving it from the agonies it could not escape. It crashed to the ground, and I could see the beautiful spotted hide, which even as I looked turned black as it was covered by thousands of swarming ants.

Small animals were frantically swimming the river, and the threshing and splashing in the water beyond our refuge island told the story of the alligators, taking advantage of their plight to get an easy meal.

The *Tyra* that had taken refuge on the limb over the water fell near the end of the island with a whining scream. There was a swirl, and water was splashed high into the air as a 'gator's tail swept the animal into deeper water. The Indians were huddled near the center of the gravel bar. They were unarmed except for their machetes, Fritz and I having the only guns. I threw the rays of my light out over the water, and everywhere the red eyes of the alligators were reflected.

I had an uneasy feeling, such as one gets when some one is staring at his back. I threw the light around, then down. Not ten feet away, in shallow water, was a huge alligator, as large or larger than the one I had shot in the afternoon, its unwinking eyes staring up at me. For a minute I watched it; then I saw it slide silently forward a couple of feet and again subside. I was being stalked.

My flashlight was of the hunting variety, with the light fastened onto the head, where it made a perfect shooting light. I took careful sight at the center of the head, where I knew the bullet would be most effective, and not glance. I squeezed the trigger, and saw the splash of the bullet as it hit the water. It does not take much to shatter a little two-hundred-and-fifty-caliber bullet, but its shocking power is terrific when it does connect; and there was not more than six inches of water over the 'gator.

A fountain of water was thrown into the air; the alligator's tail came down with a resounding thwack, and then was still.

BEHIND me an Indian yelled; I heard Fritz shoot, once, twice—and then again. I ran to the other end of the gravel-bar, and in the rays of my light there was a scene. An Indian was down on all fours, his hands and toes digging into the gravel, while firmly anchored to the seat of his short pants was a long, slender alligator, twisting and turning to throw its victim off balance, so he could be dragged into the water. The other Indians were slashing away with their machetes, but they might just as well have been using whips, for the beast's tough skin deflected their blows.

Fritz had been unable to fire a fatal shot for fear of hitting the natives. Now with the aid of the light, he placed his gun against the animal's head and let go. The 'gator's jaws snapped open, and the native went head-first among his companions, unhurt, but badly scared.

Things quieted down out in the water. Fritz waded ashore and reported the ants thicker than ever. Plenty of red eyes were still floating around in the river, and I started popping away at them with my twenty-two automatic pistol. The pistol at night was more accurate than a rifle, owing to the ease with which it could be sighted with the headlight. I aimed at the eyes, and judging by the threshing and pounding of the 'gators' tails, I was doing first rate as a marksman, but the number of eyes never seemed to diminish. I wondered where all these animals stayed in the daytime!

Fritz called my attention to strange grunting sounds from the shore. I threw the rays of my light in that direction, and was amazed to see what at first I took to be a man, walking around our camp, paying no apparent attention to the ants. We waded closer and discovered that the visitor was the only animal in the country that no doubt welcomed the visit of the army ants. A giant ant-eater! When I first saw this strange-looking animal, it was standing upright, its bushy tail waving like a plume over its back. It stood well over three feet high. It stalked majestically around, now and then sinking down on its forefeet, and I could see it thrusting out its long slender tongue to gorge itself on the ants, its natural prey.

Dawn, and hope began to glimmer in the eyes of the Indians, who had acted as though they knew they were never going to make it through the night. The coughing growl of the jaguars died away, and in the distance the morning call of the black howler monkey challenged the coming day. Birds were chirping, and nothing in nature told the tale of the terrible night we had passed, or of the devastation that had overtaken thousands of the jungle's denizens. It was just the dawning of another day.

WITH the coming of daylight, we once more waded ashore. The ants were gone, back to the subterranean tunnels where they passed the daylight hours. Behind they had left a scene of desolation. Every item of food that we had carried was gone. The bones of the jaguar lay stripped clean of meat. Snake skeletons and the bones of countless tiny animals lay scattered about, all prey to the ants —no more than an eighth of an inch in length, but countless in numbers and united in a single purpose.

Collecting what was left of our equipment, we went back to our island refuge to see what damage we had done to the alligators during our night's encounter. The huge cayman I had shot and dragged ashore the day before had been partly eaten by the ants—that is, all but the skin; it still retained its shape.

Close to the gravel bar five dead alligators lay in the water, and wading out, we could see several more. We dragged several of them ashore, knowing they would be eaten by the ants or other scavengers of the forest.

SUDDENLY there was a commotion in the water, and one of the Indians disappeared with a splash and a gurgling scream. The water was not deep, and we rushed to his aid. In the clear water we could see him, struggling, but held firm in the jaws of an alligator—not a large one fortunately, a reptile about six feet long. We rushed them. The Indians grabbed their companion, and Fritz threw his arms around the 'gator, just behind the forelegs.

Combined, we dragged them ashore. It is easy to hold a 'gator's jaws closed, but almost impossible to pry them open. The 'gator had a firm grip on the Indian's legs. The Indian was alive, but helpless to aid himself. By sheer weight, the Indians held the alligator down, while Fritz and myself set to work to pry open the jaws. We could not shoot through its head for fear of wounding the Indian. With machete and clubs we pried and prodded, to no avail, while the poor Indian screamed with fright and pain.

After half an hour's effort we gave up the idea of prying open the jaws of a live alligator. As far as I could see, there was only one way. I placed my rifle close to the animal's spine and fired. There was a convulsive kick of the tail, then a relaxing of the body, and a minute later we were able to open the jaws.

As I had thought, the Indian was more scared than hurt. There were teeth-holes in both sides of his legs, but the wounds were not torn. I cleaned the wounds, dosed them liberally with antiseptic, bound them up, and that Indian was ready—and anxious—to travel; he would rather go any place, anywhere, rather than stay there on the river for another night! The other Indians backed him in his opinion. Our supplies were gone, and I felt that I had really had enough for one trip, even if we had not got to the ruined Mayan city. For the time being I had to admit I was licked—and by the ants. The sanitary squad had cleaned us!

High Bridge

By C. STEELE

YOU may think that the life of a ranchwoman must always be a humdrum existence. But as proof that a middle-aged farm woman, raising children and chickens, making cheese and garden, need not always go out of her way to find thrills, I offer two experiences out of my life.

Our Alta Vista Ranch takes in the mesa lying on the knees of a mountain in one of the loftiest ranges of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Behind the ranch the mountain rises, covered with giant boulders and spruce trees with blue-green needles, and gray-green sage-brush, and masses of slide-rock where the wild rose and raspberry bushes cluster, and blue wild columbines bloom, and deep gulches are filled from brim to brim with snow in winter and with floods of water when the thaw comes in late spring or early summer.

In front of the mesa the earth drops steeply down; and there, at the bottom of the gulch, the Lake Fork tears along over the feet of our mountain and the larger mountain which rises on the other side. In summer and fall the Lake Fork becomes a beautiful crystal-clear icy-cold trout stream, except when rains and cloudbursts send torrents roaring down the gulch, or during the spring break-up when the narrow channel can hardly hold the melting snows. It was these floods that took out the bridges in the vicinity of Alta Vista Ranch.

At the time of which I write, one bridge only, near the ranch, had succeeded in defying the Lake Fork to dislodge it: the famous High Bridge. A marvel of construction, built entirely of timber, this railroad bridge carried the narrow-gauge trains four hundred and thirty-five feet across the gorge, a hundred and twenty-five feet above the stream. Built in the nineties to care for the output from the rich silver mines in these mountains, it is still in use, and was for many years famous as the highest all-timber railroad bridge in the world.

During an illness that kept my husband bedfast for several years before his death, the problem of producing and marketing kept the children and me busy. The river sometimes made this problem very difficult, for the road leading to the thriving mining town that was our market lay along the mountain over on the other side.

In the winter we drove across on the packed snow and ice, beneath which we could always hear the threat of the water as it rolled over the boulders in its bed.

One morning, I recall, toward the end of winter, we loaded eggs, butter, cream and cheese into the express wagon. A one-armed man who worked for us, an old neighbor who wished to go to town, and I, sat up in the seat, wrapped up against the mountain cold. A third horse was tied behind. The one-armed man, very capable for all his handicap, was driving. We had hardly got out onto the snow and ice over the river before discovering that it was giving way beneath us. The frightened team plunged and tried to turn about; the wheels shrieked against the side of the wagon from the sharp turn; the wagon tipped and slewed on the collapsing ice, and in we went.

We made quite a splash, and cakes of ice rose all round us; but we landed right side up. Horses, tongue and single-trees were so tangled up that the driver had all he could manage. And the hole we had made was too narrow to turn in. The neighbor managed to pull the lead horse up close and got to his back. After reaching the bank, he made for home, a quarter-mile distant, and brought back my thirteen-year-old son. Working in the icy current, they somehow unhitched the team, and snaked the rig out backward. I had hung onto the seat; but every box, basket and jar had been tipped into the river. And that was that.

BUT we were still on the wrong side of the river, and it was necessary to get across to get the medicine and supplies. So after getting dried and warm, our helper and I started out again. This time we drove alongside the railroad track, which runs across the meadow, until we reached the grade. There we drove right onto the track and bounced

Racing with death over and through a wild river.

along the ties to the cattle-guard. I held the horses while the man laid down planks (which we always kept near the track for this purpose) for the horses to walk on. The horses danced across the planks, which were then put into the wagon for use on the other side.

Once across the guard, the ground seemed to drop right out from under our feet as we drove out onto High Bridge. At that time planks were nailed down paralleling the rails all the way across, and barrels of water were placed on the ends of the ties at intervals, to be used in case of fire. There is no railing on this bridge—nothing above the level of the rails. I seemed to myself the smallest creature on earth as I sat on the high seat and tried to keep from seeing the bottom of the gorge so far below. But reassuring the horses, I drove on steadily. Then the cliff rose suddenly to meet the ties, and there was the firm though very narrow railroad grade. Even the horses showed relief when I pulled them up while the man put the planks over the cattle-guard.

But my breath of relief came too soon, for as we followed the narrow wagon road along the side of the mountain, with the rocky cliff rising on one side of the road and the drop into the river on the other, we came to a place where water had run down a break in the cliff and had covered the entire roadway with a great hump of ice that sloped steeply toward the river side. To drive onto that hump meant that team and wagon would end in the river down below. And we could not turn.

There was just one thing to do, and we did it: we clawed and scooped and carried in our hands, enough dirt and gravel to cover the ice, so that the horses could keep their footing. Even at that, their bellies nearly touched the ground as they scrambled across that hump.

When we reached town, I phoned home that we had made it. Then I bought the medicine and home supplies as quickly as possible, borrowed a pick and shovel to use on the hump, and started homeward. I was desperately tired, and there was still that dangerous trip home, but I had learned long before that what had to be done, *could* be done.

ON another occasion, summer rains had swollen the river. The bridge below us had gone out some time before, so we were fording the stream whenever it was necessary to take the vegetables and dairy products to town.

Radishes, onions, beets and carrots were washed and bunched. Peas were picked and put in a bushel basket. Eggs and butter were ready, and all was loaded into the express wagon. I looked them over with pride, for not only did they mean many, many hours of back-breaking labor for the children and me, but they were also an outward expression of our inner independence; we could make our living! And besides, very clean and fresh vegetables are things of beauty.

I climbed up over the wheel and onto the seat, and took the reins from the hands of my thirteen-year-old son. He handed up his little sister, then mounted his saddle-horse, and preceded us.

When we reached the river, my boy rode in to gauge the depth and to try to locate the crossing. We could not go straight across, because of the boulders in the bed of the stream; and now these great rocks were covered by the water and it was difficult to tell where the ford lay. Son seemed to be off the ford, for the water boiled around him, high up on the neck of the horse, but he finally made it back, and climbed into the wagon.

"I'll drive," he said. "I think I can tell where the road goes, by the landmarks on the banks."

But even on the ford, the water was deeper than he had thought, and soon the water was up in the wagon-bed, and we were drawing our feet as far up as possible. And then it was over the bed, and over the back of the mare, and the current caught the laprobe off our laps and whirled it away. For just a moment its length swept like a live thing on the surface; but Son had all he could attend to, with the team, and Little Daughter and I were holding onto the seat with all our might and had no time for laprobes. Away went the vegetables, all so clean and bright. I shall never forget how the bushel of new peas rose on the surface, keeping a massed formation for a moment, covering the troubled waters where we were with vivid green; and I recall brief amazement that one bushel of peas could cover so much water.

The mare was fighting to keep her footing, and both horses were frightened. If a horse got down, we would have no chance. And if the stream were still deeper ahead of us, its swift current would probably take the wagon downstream in spite of swimming horses. Our only hope seemed to lie in turning and getting back to the bank we had left.

I WISH I might be able to make you see the way my thirteen-year-old boy acted. I never think of this experience that I don't feel so proud of him that my heart fairly hurts. Inch by inch he eased the horses around over the rocky bottom, holding the mare steady when she seemed to be climbing with her forefeet onto a rock and then slipping off. But when the pull on the tongue began to turn the wagon, it began to upset, and the current got hold of the bed. It hung at a sickening angle, and for the moment I felt paralyzed and hopeless. But he somehow found strength to pull the team back to their former positions, and the wagon again settled onto its four wheels.

I didn't try to give advice: he understood the dangers as well as I, and he understood the river and the horses better than I. Since his father had been ill, he had learned to make decisions.

"Mamma," he called above the roar of the water, "we're going across."

I looked at him and nodded. There wasn't a thing I could do to help, except, of course, that I prayed.

The horses were started at a slightly different angle, but they seemed hardly able to pull the wagon at all. Only their own fear, and desperate urging, drove them to pull us across, with the wagon lurching and tipping over the rocky bottom, and the horses plunging and slipping back.

When we were finally drawn out on the opposite bank, and the horses stood with heaving sides as the water ran off them, we discovered that our long laprobe had swirled around and through the spokes of a front wheel, and around the axle until the wheel was completely locked.

WE didn't indulge in any celebration. Son gave me the lines and began untangling the laprobe. We agreed that it would be best for me to come back by way of High Bridge. He untied his riding-horse from the end-gate, and as he mounted, assured me that he would meet me to put down the planks at the hour I might name. I watched him while he forced his horse into the river again and made his slow way back across. He waved cheerfully, and rode toward home.

Little Daughter and I drove on to town. Only our wet feet showed what we had been through. We bought groceries and medicine, and told our customers we would get their orders filled in a few days. I phoned my son as we were leaving town.

He rode across High Bridge and had the planks laid over the cattle-guard. Train-time was near, and the horses seemed to know it. They could hardly be forced onto the guard, and then acted up so that they had to be led onto the bridge. Son lifted his sister off the wagon, for we thought it too risky to allow her to ride; and she came along behind. She had not once mentioned being afraid.

The horses grew quieter after we passed the deepest part of the gorge, and Son rode on ahead to lay the planks. As we neared the guard they began dancing again, and as their feet left the end of the boards, they began running in earnest. Straight along the narrow railroad grade they ran, with the wagon flying and bouncing so that it was all I could do to hold onto the reins and stay in the wagon. When we came to a place where I could turn them off the grade, they nearly jerked the wheels off in their eagerness to leave the track. They ran into the meadow a little way, and halted.

Having seen that his sister was over the guards and out of danger, my son was coming at a gallop; and away behind came little B—, hopping along fast as she could make it. Son and I looked at each other—and were able to laugh!

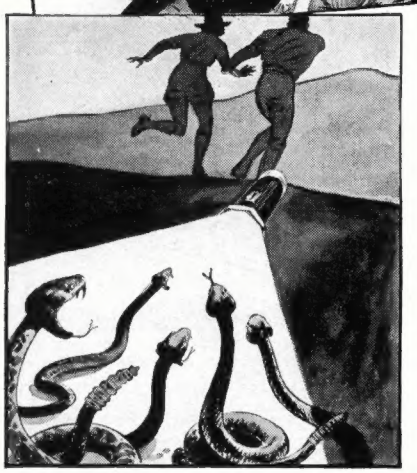
"We Were Asleep in a Nest of Rattlers!"

"I READ YOUR ADS REGULARLY," WRITES RAYMOND COBB, OF 303 EAST LIBERTY STREET, CHARLOTTE, N. C., "BUT I HAVE YET TO SEE AN 'EVEREADY' EXPERIENCE THAT COMPARES WITH MINE."

"Roughing it in the mountains, my wife and I were sleeping on a large flat rock, when I was suddenly wakened. My wife, who had the light, was flashing it in my eyes.

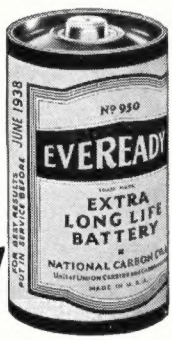
"A second later a rattler cut the mountain stillness. He sounded like a machine gun, he was so close...and, as I lay motionless, scarcely daring to breathe, *I felt his lethal slithering body cross my own!*...Then other rattles sounded all around us!

"But before he could strike, my wife diverted the snake's attention with the flashlight beam. I leapt to my feet, so did she, throwing the light at the six-foot intruder.



"We fled through the dark woods while the rattlers gathered on the rock to strike at the light that saved us, a light powered with DATED 'Eveready' batteries that were really *fresh* when we bought them months before.

(Signed) Raymond Cobb"

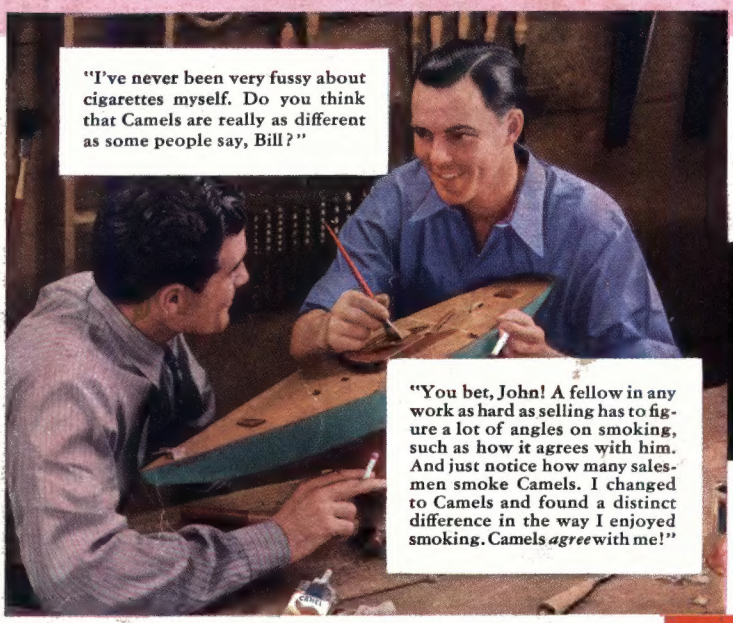


FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

"Are Camels Really different from other Cigarettes?"

A QUESTION OF INTEREST TO EVERY SMOKER


"I've never been very fussy about cigarettes myself. Do you think that Camels are really as different as some people say, Bill?"
"You bet, John! A fellow in any work as hard as selling has to figure a lot of angles on smoking, such as how it agrees with him. And just notice how many salesmen smoke Camels. I changed to Camels and found a distinct difference in the way I enjoyed smoking. Camels *agree* with me!"

...H. W. DALY, 34, rayon salesman, and millions of other steady smokers say: "Camels *are* really different." Camels are preferred by the *largest* body of smokers ever known.

A KISS FROM MARITA (Mrs. Daly) and Bill is off to his job. The Dalys agree about Camels. Mrs. Daly smoked them first. "Now it's Camels with both of us," she says.

A FRIEND DROPS IN. Daly passes the Camels and answers a question: "Steady smoking is the test that shows Camels in a class by themselves. Camels don't make my nerves 'edgy.'"

MARITA'S PLANNING a grand feed. "We enjoy entertaining," she says. "I like plenty of Camels at the table. Camels cheer up one's digestion. They even cheered up Bill's disposition."

ON WEEK-ENDS, Bill's a camera fan. On week days he "pounds the streets." "When I get tired," he says, "I get a quick 'lift' with a Camel."

PEOPLE DO APPRECIATE THE
COSTLIER TOBACCOS
IN CAMELS

THEY ARE THE
LARGEST-SELLING
CIGARETTE IN AMERICA

A matchless blend of finer—
MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS—
Turkish and Domestic

Copyright, 1938, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

ONE SMOKER TELLS ANOTHER.. **"Camels agree with me"**